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Shall we Not?



JOHNSTON.

By Rev. Hugh Johnston, M.A., B.D.

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Shall we or Shall we Not ?

A SERIES OF

FIVE DISCOURSES

PREACHED IN THE PAVILION MUSIC HALL.

BY THE

REV. HUGH JOHNSTON, M.A., B.D.



TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS, 78 & 80 KING STREET EAST.

MONTREAL: C. W. COATES.

HALIFAX: S. F. HUESTIS.

1886.



INTRODUCTION.

It is one of the highest functions of the pulpit, embracing, as it does, within the sphere of its influence whatever affects the character and conditions of society, to so use its opportunity to teach, that those who wait upon its ministrations shall not be unadvised of the tendency and consequences of whatever habits, customs or amusements find a place in social life, and are more likely than otherwise to be hurtful to health or dangerous to character. Nor are those practices to be excepted which, though under some circumstances not positively wrong, prove by experience their tendency to weaken the moral responsibilities of the unconverted, and hinder the growth of piety in the souls of believers. In the very nature of things, the pulpit must often find itself in opposition to customs and practices which prevail to a greater or less extent among those to whom it addresses its teachings, and with respect to which they are not predisposed to yield to its conclusions; and in no case is this more probable than when it discusses those usages which are justified by

the example and opinions of any considerable number of respectable people. Notwithstanding this fact, however, it is the duty of the minister of Christ to preserve a good conscience in his teaching as well as in his life. In view of this, the pew owes to the pulpit a fair and candid estimate of its utterances upon debatable questions, as well as upon those about which there is little or no controversy. In the discussion of the questions involved in the sermons embraced in this pamphlet, it will doubtless be conceded that the Author has taken no unfair advantage of his position, but has calmly and logically reasoned his way to the conclusions he has reached. The favor with which the series was received by the very large congregations before whom they were preached, and the solicitation of friends, have determined their publication in the present form, with the hope that they may by wider circulation extend their influence beyond the sphere of the Author's own pastorate, and that many who have regarded as doubtful the practices these discourses condemn, may be awakened to the lurking danger which lies concealed within them all.

S. G. STONE.

TORONTO, *May 17th, 1886.*

PREFACE.

THE following discourses were delivered to large congregations in the Pavilion Music Hall, Horticultural Gardens, during the alteration and enlargement of the Carlton Street Church.

The thought of publishing them was not entertained by the Author until he was urged by many friends to do so; and, even then, he would not have had the courage to print them, but that the questions asked are of vital interest to the Church and to the world.

He has not aimed at originality, or freshness, or scholarship, but at simplicity and directness, and has tried to discriminate the true from the false. He has preserved the sermons in the free and familiar form in which they were uttered in spoken discourse.

He has to acknowledge his conscious and unconscious indebtedness to many who have written and spoken on the subject of amusements.

The solemn conviction of the writer is that topics bearing upon daily life in business and pleasure and society are not sufficiently treated of from the pulpit, so that people are often left to drift without direction into the most dangerous currents of worldliness.

He has spoken plainly and strongly, but with a tender regard for the welfare of his hearers, and the honor of Christ and His Church.

He has not sought to please any but the Master, and to His loving-kindness and blessing the Author commends this little volume and its readers.

29 ALEXANDER STREET,
TORONTO, *May, 1886.*



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SERMON I.

SHALL WE OR SHALL WE NOT DRINK WINE?

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."—*1 Cor. viii. 13.*

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."—*Rom. xiv. 21.*



THE Apostle in this chapter from the Corinthians is dealing with the matter of food offered to idols. He is urging his converts to abstain from the use of such meat. You know the nature of these idol-sacrifices. Animals were offered in sacrifice to idols, of which part was eaten by the offerer and

his friends at a feast, and the remainder sold in the market. To these Christians rescued from idolatry there was this difficulty: if they ate the meat they seemed to sanction idolatry; if they abstained they seemed to say that an idol was a real being, and so they gave a sanction to superstition. The Apostle says, "We know that an idol is nothing at all, . . . there is only one God and Father of us all, and one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ." But while the more sound-minded Christians recognize that an idol god is nothing, there are others, still under the power of their old pagan associations, who cherish the impression of the reality of the idol god. These, induced by Christian example to eat, yet trembling with fear for the imaginary guilt of their own act, really *transgress* their conscience and are thus "condemned" or defiled. To those who know that idols do not exist it is but common meat, but the weaker, owing to their former intercourse with the idol and their contact with idolatry, look upon the meat while eating it as an idol sacrifice, and being thus em-

boldened to wrong-doing, they fall from Christ and perish. Now, he makes an appeal to the strong. Will you use your strength, your knowledge, your liberty to entrap a weak brother, wound his conscience, and sin against Christ? The Apostle rises to the full height of self-consecration. It is sublime; it is full of tenderness for the souls of men; it is the law of benevolence circumscribing our liberty so as to prevent injury to the conscience of another. 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' Now, I am here to say that this is the only firm and impregnable ground on which to stand in support of the practice of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks.

Men everywhere do what they see others do, and some will assuredly drink these beverages because we do. We know also that the moderate use of them develops very frequently into intemperance, with its far-reaching and terrible consequences. Granted that it is lawful and

proper to use these drinks, yet, by reason of the evils that come from their excessive use, men should totally abstain. Though there be no personal danger, yet, because of others, not so firm of nerve or resolute of purpose, we should forego their use. The principle demands that we should deny ourselves for the purpose of doing good to others who are exposed to the evil, and who may be led, by our example, to take the first step on the road to drunkenness. This principle made Paul the noble man that he was, and was the key-note of his sublime career.

So, in the Epistle to the Romans, we find that there were certain converts from Judaism who still felt bound to observe the ceremonial law; other converts, satisfied that that law was abolished, made no distinction whatever in meats. The former were offended by the practice of the latter. Accordingly, the Apostle, from this matter of comparatively small moment, establishes a principle of action universally binding in all ages and under all circumstances. He says, "It is good neither to

eat flesh nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Oh, that weak and stumbling brother! Do the social drinking usages of the present time put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in the way of others? Then, I must practice self-denial for the good of others. Grant that I can safely tamper with the wine cup; that I can take it in moderation, and be infallibly certain of its never hurting me. Very well. Dare I answer for my children and take the risk of their happiness for both worlds, that they will never suffer by my example, and, by everything that is solemn in death, judgment, and eternity, dare I give the guarantee that they will never use it but in moderation? Having granted even that, can I say that the young and inexperienced, the weak and easily tempted, shall never suffer by my example, rendered all the more dangerous because seemingly so safe. I cannot. "No man liveth to himself." I cannot take it without the risk of occasioning, unintentionally, though it be, injury to others—an in-

jury which may lead to the eternal ruin of my brother for whom Christ has died. Here, then, is the principle laid down by the Apostle—full of the noblest sentiment and loftiest piety. It is manly, it is Christian to abstain. The law of charity to the weak demands that I should abstain from whatever jeopardizes the souls of men for whom Christ died.

Do you say, "Have I not a perfect right to drink wine?" I even grant you that. But, is it not more noble to sacrifice the things we have a right to do than to insist upon our personal rights when it is to the injury of others? These converts were boasting of their privileges and vaunting their liberties; talking of rights, rights, rights, instead of doing duties. The Apostle says, "Abstain for the sake of love, lest your example lead weaker brothers to sin." Can any man with anything of the love of Christ in him—anything of the spirit of the Master—resist such an appeal? Is it not better to deny ourselves something, even if we have a perfect right to do it, rather

than cause the stumbling of others. This is the principle—that things not wrong in themselves are to be given up, if our use of them hurts others. Carry that out and it would throttle the demon of drink, and dry up the mighty river of intemperance in a generation. Keep this principle before you, while I present some of the other pleas for total abstinence.

You will be benefitted physically by abstaining.

I know that it is claimed by the wine-bibbing advocates of indulgence that there are many physical benefits accruing to the wine drinker. What magical virtues are ascribed to it! In winter it warms you, in summer it cools you; when wet it dries you, and when dry it wets you; when heavy-hearted it lightens you, and when light-hearted it steadies you; when you are not hungry it gives an appetite, and when hungry it takes it away; when weak it makes you strong, and when strong it makes you stronger! All a mockery! It is not a food. Who says so? Scientists say so. There is not a

physiologist of the day who does not admit that alcoholic drink passes from the stomach into the blood unchanged. It courses through the system, and not a particle of it is fit to enter into the composition of muscle, flesh, bone, blood, brain, sinew, hair, nail or skin, and it is at last cast out by the organs which carry off the impurities of the blood. It does not even produce heat, but lowers the temperature of the body. Adam Hayles, the Arctic explorer, who got nearest the North Pole, did it without a drop of stimulant, and he was the only man that could draw the sledge during the last expedition. In the Greely expedition, those who outlived the combined rigors of starvation and Arctic frost were not users of intoxicants or tobacco.

But, you say, if it does not help digestion, if it does not feed or warm me, it will surely strengthen me. False again! It actually lessens your muscular power and wastes your vital force. By the testimony of over two thousand of the most eminent medical men of the world, alcohol is "not at all required in health, and its

use, even in moderation, injures the nervous tissues and is deleterious to health." It is especially injurious in continuous muscular exertion. The athletes and great rowers when in training use no wine or whiskey. Ask Harry Gilmore, the fighter, when he has business on hand, if there is anything like cold water and dumb-bells. Ask Hanlan, when in training for a great aquatic contest, if there is anything like abstinence and exercise. Captain Webb swam the Channel, and Weston, the great pedestrian, walked his thousand miles without a drop of stimulant. Insurance companies find the risk on the lives of abstainers seventeen per cent. better than that on non-abstainers' lives. The total abstainers in England and America, who now number at least ten millions, are the strongest and healthiest of men.

Our second plea is that you will be benefitted mentally by total abstinence.

Alcohol is particularly a brain-poison, and assaults the very throne of our manhood. It has the magical power to deceive with a temporary

brilliancy, but it is only a treacherous flash, for it deranges the entire domain of intellect. Sir Henry Thompson says, "That of all people who cannot stand alcohol, the brain worker can do so least." Sir William Gull says that it degenerates the tissues and spoils the intellect." Macaulay tells us that it ruined the dazzling intellect of Byron; and we know that the brightest lights in the walks of literature, the bench, the bar, and the pulpit, have been quenched in this engulfing vortex of degradation and ruin.

Our third plea is that you will be benefitted morally by total abstinence.

The whole tendency of intoxicants is to excite the lower—the animal nature—and to neutralize the spiritual. Though many may stop short of being drunkards, yet drinking blunts the moral sensibilities, disorganizes the moral instincts, and enslaves the enervated will. Drink is one of the surest of the devil's ways to man, and of man's way to the devil. Intemperance violates both tables of the law, and with hands polluted with blood, and with un pitying heart pursues

its destructive work. Nearly all our murders are committed under the infernal stimulus of drink. Booth had to stiffen his nerves with brandy before he could fire the pistol shot into the brain of the kingly Lincoln. Examine the official reports of our prisons and penitentiaries and asylums and you will find that drink furnishes more of their occupants than all other sources of crime and pauperism combined. Says Canon Wilberforce: "A leading judge of the Divorce Court has declared that nine out of ten of the cases upon which he has to adjudicate owe their origin to strong drink. The columns of the daily papers, the constant utterances of judges, magistrates, coroners and superintendents of lunatic asylums accumulate evidence that the most direct stimulus to crime, lunacy and pauperism is strong drink." The brothel uses drinking as the bait and stimulant of passion. Every house of infamy is a drinking house. It is the natural ally of wickedness. The *Times*, editorially, says: "There is not a vice, or a disease, or a disorder, or

a calamity of any kind that has not its frequent rise in the public house. It degrades, ruins and brutalizes a large portion of the British people." Its evils reach forth into a dark and hopeless eternity. No need to repeat to the wretched inebriate the fearful assurance, "No drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God!" He feels it in his inmost soul. Hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming. The devils are so sure of him that they come up and gather around him, and he goes from his fiend-haunted death-bed into the black darkness of an eternity without God and without hope.

Our fourth plea for total abstinence is that it is the only thing that can check the progress of intemperance.

We know how this destructive scourge reaches all places, all homes, all hearts; we know that the bill which intemperance presents every year to the British nation, and which it pays down in hard cash every three hundred and sixty-five days, is \$650,000,000—two millions for every working day—and that the

results of drink cost annually \$500,000,000 more; we know that the producing power of English workingmen has diminished by one-sixth in comparison with other countries because of the excessive drinking habits of the people, and that in Ireland the sum annually spent exceeds the whole rental of the Island by \$11,000,000, placing intemperance among the chief causes of Irish poverty and discontent; we know that in this Canada of ours over 17,000,000 gallons are annually consumed, or nearly four gallons for every man, woman, and child in the Dominion, and that the cost of the traffic is over \$11 per head of the population; we know that drink is the disgrace of the nation, the cause of three-quarters of our poverty, and profligacy, and crime, filling our prisons, and penitentiaries, and asylums; we know of the thousands that are led as sheep to the shambles of this great destroyer—the husbands and fathers, robbed at once of their courage, their manhood, and their reason, and the poor suffering women, called wives, and helpless

children, left neglected, and suffering, and desolate.

Now, this flood of intemperance has its origin from some source. Niagara is the overflow of the great lakes—Erie, St. Clair, Huron, Michigan, Superior—with their rivers and streams. To stop Niagara you must dry up these lake and river sources. What is the Niagara of intemperance? It is the moderate drinking habits of society. None of you, I trust, have ever felt the ungovernable appetite of the drunkard. The late John B. Gough has often thrilled us with his description of it. It is a raging storm sweeping over the whole being—a maddening of the brain, a corrosive gnawing of the stomach—and this storm-fire as it rolls along thralls the will, sweeps down every motive, silences reason, stifles conscience, until the poor wreck, with crazed brain, and blasted nerves, and consuming fever, and throbbing heart, cries out, “I sell my soul and body, my reputation, my family, my wife and children, my best hopes, my Heaven, my God, my Christ, my all, for

drink. I leap gladly into hell, with all its horrors, for drink ; give me drink ! give me drink !” How have men of intellectual power, and noble instincts, and true hearts, and amiable characters, plunged into such depths ? You know, everybody knows, that the only way by which any man ever became a drunkard was by the continued use of drink—the frequent becoming the habitual, until at last he found that the appetite was uncontrollable—a disease, a passion, a devouring flood ; and, overwhelmed by it, the cry has gone up, “ O my God, too late ! too late ! ”

I want to say to those who advocate the easy kind of temperance—*moderate drinking*—that this is the cause of intemperance.

“ No,” you say, “ excess is the cause of intemperance.” I answer, excess is intemperance—the effect and not the cause. This monster drunkenness will live as long as it is fed, and as well try to stop Niagara in its thundering, or to arrest the lightning of the skies, as try to stop the mighty stream of intemperance so long

as it is fed by moderate drinking. Intemperance begins long before the point of visible inebriation. The daily use of ardent spirits in any degree is intemperance. Hundreds of persons who are not drunkards, yet suffer the evils of intemperance that are not told by the trembling hand, or faltering tongue, or clouded brain, or stumbling feet.

Allow me to lay down three propositions, the truth of which is self-evident. 1st. All moderate drinkers do not become confirmed drunkards. Some have taken liquor through a long course of years and are not drunkards—in the common acceptance of that term. 2nd. All confirmed drunkards were once moderate drinkers. That is where the evil began. They all tiptoed a little before they drank deeply. Thirty or forty thousand drunkards in our Dominion, and, though they are dying daily, the ranks are always full, and are constantly being recruited! Whence come the recruits? From the moderate drinkers; therefore, listen to my third proposition: 3rd. You, moderate

drinker, may become a drunkard. Beware of the beginnings of evil! Do you say, "There is no danger. I can stop when I like." I tell you there is terrible danger. You put yourself in awful peril. No danger? You are lulling yourself in the self-confident delusion with which millions before you have lulled themselves. From the day that Noah "planted a vineyard and made himself drunk;" from the days when the two sons of Aaron perished at the altar in their intoxication, numberless sons and daughters of men have felt the fatal fascination of that "mocker" which first allures, then maddens, and at last enslaves and destroys. Are you any safer than all the drunkards of all past ages? Many of them were men of keen intellect, noble instincts, and manly character. How did they become drunkards? Were they born so? Did they become drunkards the moment they tasted strong drink? Did they think, or even dream, of becoming inebriates? No! no! There is only one way by which any

man ever became a drunkard, and that is, by growing fond of drink.

Here, then, is the radical cure of intemperance—stop drinking. We must do everything that can be done by way of legislation to cripple and prohibit the liquor traffic. Prohibition is the great end towards which we must all work, aiding and welcoming all legislation on the side of temperance.

The Canada Temperance Act of 1878, known as the Scott Act, has been adopted in some thirty counties. It is a good restrictive measure, if properly and efficiently enforced; but the constituted authorities have not duly enforced the Act where, by large majorities, it has become law. Open encouragement has been given to the violators of the law, and public confidence in the permanence of the Act has been weakened. It is much easier to suppress an evil than to regulate it. All civilized countries have recognized the necessity of civil measures for the suppression of this evil. They have been trying to regulate and restrain the

liquor traffic by License laws, and with what result? Failure everywhere. Regulation does not regulate. The only legislative remedy for the evils of the liquor traffic is a law prohibiting entirely the manufacture, importation and sale of all intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes. The welfare of society requires such legislation. The liquor traffic is the enemy of law and order and civilization everywhere.

The public sentiment of Canada will soon demand and sustain such a measure. If liquor is a good thing, let every man sell it; if it is an evil, let no man sell it. The power that prohibits four hundred and ninety-nine men from selling it, can and should prohibit the five hundredth man from selling it also. Public sentiment is daily gathering force in this direction, and that sentiment must be crystallized into law. Let us raise the standard of prohibition and fight for it.

But, meanwhile, as various suggestions are offered for the removal of this common curse, we offer an effectual panacea and a radical cure. What is it? Total abstinence. It is the only

help for the drunkard. It offers the only personal security against the growing power of the drink habit. You can never become a drunkard if you never touch liquor. That is certain. Archdeacon Farrar says Cruickshank, the artist, offered \$500 for proof of a violent crime committed by a total abstainer, and the money remains to this day uncalled for; and now the Archdeacon offers the same amount for proof of any one case, in the church or out of it, where drunkenness has been cured without total abstinence. If a man say, "I can stand; I have too much manhood in me to become a slave," I cannot share his assurance, when I know that every one that ever started on the drunkard's career did so in the same self-confidence.

It is the only safe and effective example. If a man is fond of wine he ought to abstain for his own sake; if he is not fond of it he ought to abstain for the sake of others. Of all the rose-water remedies for drunkenness the most pitiable is that of moderation. The people who extol this cheap and easy moral excellence of

imbibing wine and brandy tell us that total abstinence is a much poorer stage of virtue than moderation; they tell us that moderation is a much higher and loftier virtue than total abstinence. They say it is cowardly to fly from evil, as if it were wisdom and not madness to court temptation, forgetting that the wisest Teacher has commanded us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Noble patterns of self-denying virtue, these people who perform the heroic act of doing what they like because they like it.

Let me address you as members of society in reference to its drinking usages. The despotism of custom! In clubs, at public and other dinners, in home entertainments, we yield to the drink curse, from fear of the taunt that we are unfashionable or inhospitable. Better stand by our principles, and our guests will respect us more in the end. As members of society, it rests with us to deliver a great "Yes" or "No" to the "Shall we or shall we not drink wine?" If our conscience and reason tell us that this is a damnable beverage, then let us out with it for-

ever. Make no compromise with social customs that are wrong and injurious. Let parents preserve their home and family from this evil! Are you a father? Take the side of total abstinence. You may save your son. At a wedding party, where I had refused wine, the host, an old gentleman, rallied me before the company, saying that he could take a glass in moderation and enjoy it, while I could not. Poor, deluded man! One of his own sons, a most promising young man, had died a drunkard, and another, brilliant also, was on his way to the terrible abyss of destruction!

Are you a Christian? Then, be a total abstainer. If you want to know whether total abstinence is a duty toward your God, a duty to yourself, a duty to your tempted and suffering fellow-men, just read the passages which I have taken as my texts: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend;" "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor

drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak."

Take it for granted, then, that there is no sin in a glass of wine; yet the law of Christian charity to the weak demands that I abstain from everything that can give serious offence, and the Christian who, for the sake of tickling his palate or of exercising his liberty, will jeopardize the souls for whom Christ died, certainly does not exhibit the self-denying spirit of his Master. Occasional drinking will do you no good; entire abstinence will do you no harm. It is manly; it is patriotic; it is Christian. Destroy not him with thy wine for whom Christ died. That is not right; it is wrong; it is sin—sin against thy brother and sin against Christ!

Are you a wife, a sister, a daughter? For the sake of female virtue and domestic happiness abstain! For woman's sake, suffering woman's sake, abstain, for who can tell the history of the bleeding, starving wives, the broken-hearted mothers, the wrongs of children, the domestic sorrows and miseries caused by drink!

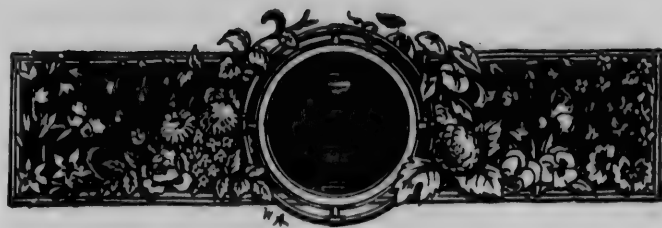
And you, queens of society, will you tempt others? Will you put the wine glass to their lips? Will you make it fashionable, or keep it fashionable, to drink? When your friends are gathered in the parlor, O woman, I entreat you for the sake of your brave and manly brothers, your noble husband or your devoted son, tempt no man by putting the dangerous cup to his lips!

Young man, become a pledged abstainer. You cannot afford to learn to love intoxicating beverages. They are not needful; they are expensive, and, struggling for a place in the world, you cannot afford so undesirable a waste. They expose you to temptations and snares, or if not
• injured yourself, your example will injure others. It may cost you a laugh, and bring upon you an occasional sneer, but you take the right side, the manly side, and you espouse a glorious cause, a cause that will triumph, for if this be a hopeless cause, then the cause of our Dominion is hopeless; if this be a losing battle, then the battle of Canada is lost. But the battle shall be

won, and you will share the triumph. Therefore, to all the enticements of fashion, to all the banterings of comrades, to all the invitations of beauty to taste this "mockery," in the name of health, wealth, honor, virtue and example, everything dear in this life—in the name of your immortal soul, in the name of heaven, in the name of God, say "No!"







SERMON II.

SHALL WE OR SHALL WE NOT PLAY CARDS?

"Casting lots."—*Matthew xxvii. 35.*

THESE gamblers were the four soldiers that were guarding the Cross on which the Saviour hung in His hour of shame and weakness. In crucifixion the clothing of the victims always fell as perquisites to the men appointed to guard the execution. Little did they dream how exactly they were fulfilling Jewish prediction as they proceeded to divide between them the garments of Jesus. His under-

garment was found to be of one continuous woven texture, and to divide it would have been to destroy it; so they contented themselves with gambling for it. This done, they sat down and watched until the end, beguiling the lingering hours by eating and drinking, jibing and playing dice. Oh! what a stupendous and moving scene in the world's history! The suffering Son of God hanging in helpless agony upon the Tree; His arms extended wide, and at the centre of each open palm a huge iron nail forced through the quivering flesh and lacerated veins. Through each foot another was driven into the wooden cross. Around him were the coarse, idle, vulgar multitude, who had flocked to feed their greedy eyes upon His sufferings—the chief priests and scribes adding their reproaches and taunts to the jeers of the passers-by, and at His feet the heartless, heathen soldiers, unmoved by the sight of helpless anguish, with cruel indifference drinking and playing dice.

I employ this text to set forth the sin and

shame of gambling. The subject is of public interest and general importance. Directly or indirectly it strikes home to all. The father may think it of no concern to him, while his own son may be making the wild plunge into the fascinating snare. The business man may think that he is not affected by the evil, while his confidential clerk is losing money every night at the gaming table. Women may think this subject of no interest to them; but, sisters, it concerns your brothers; wives, it concerns your husbands; mothers, it concerns your sons over whom you have wept and prayed. Some of you may ask, "What is the use of lifting up your voice against these great evils? You cannot stop them." But, by the help of God, we will warn the young of this Niagara, lest they be carried into the foaming, hissing, whirling rapids, and, shrieking, struggling, blaspheming, go over into the terrible abyss. There is something always gained in rebuking sin. Whitefield and a pious companion were much annoyed one night at a hotel by a set of gamblers in an

adjoining room. Their noise and clamor so excited Whitefield's abhorrence and pitying sympathy that he could not rest. He said, "I will go to them and reprove their wickedness." His companion remonstrated, but in vain. He went; his words were apparently fruitless. Returning, he laid down to sleep. His companion asked, "What did you gain by it?" "A soft pillow," was his answer, and he soon fell asleep. So, if we cannot stay this desolating tide, we must at least discharge our duty by uttering a faithful warning. I propose to dwell—

I. Upon the sin of gambling; and

II. Upon the evils of card-playing.

First—Gambling is playing any game of chance for property, or the risking of money upon a hazard. Two conditions are essential to gaming—hazard, and the want of an equivalent for that which may be won. Hence, gambling may be carried on without cards or dice. The speculator who deals in futures is gambling; the dealer in fancy stocks; the grain operator, who plays his "squeezing and cornering" game, is a

gambler ; and many a one too saintly to touch a pack of cards is wicked enough to use other people's money, risking, perhaps, the property of widows and the fatherless in reckless speculation. It is this hastening to get rich that is at the bottom of these swindling enterprises. The old-fashioned way of gaining a living by honorable trades, or of making a fortune by honesty and hard work, is too slow for this fast age. Lottery tickets are illustrations of gambling. When I was in New Orleans last winter the whole country seemed deluged with lotteries. We have them in our very churches. Have you never been at a fair or bazaar, where some persuasive young person has urged you to take a ticket in the hope of becoming the happy possessor of some valuable piece of embroidery or handsome chair. That is Church gambling.

Another method of gambling is the system of betting, which is not confined to the race-course ; but the most innocent amusements, as yachting, boating, and ball-playing are made the occasion of putting up wagers. It penetrates everywhere.

"What will you bet," and "I'll bet you," are continually heard expressions.

Gambling is of ancient origin. The passion is universal, and every nation, civilized or savage, has its game. The Greeks and Romans played games of chance, and so did the ancient Germans. Tacitus tells us they often staked their own persons and went into voluntary slavery to those who won them. Throughout all the Eastern nations gambling is common among all classes. I never saw anything like the gambling that prevails all round the shores of the Mediterranean.

On the castle-crowned promontory of Monaco is the world-famed gambling establishment of Monte Carlo. It is the fairest spot on the Riviera, and there vice is king. The Prince of Monaco derives his revenue from these gaming tables. There are grand hotels and lovely gardens, where the palm and the orange bloom, where the finest band in the world discourses the sweetest music, and great gaming rooms with their Moorish ceilings and fine paintings and beautiful

decorations, and at these tables the most accomplished knaves in Europe; men and women, bright and gay, or haggard and vile. All day long the blinds are drawn, as if to shut out the light of day, and the dark work goes on, or the unwary are entrapped, many of them tempted to play just for fun, until the work of ruin ends in suicide. Christian England reeks with the abomination, from the famous races on Derby Day to the card playing about the purlieus of Piccadilly.

On this continent it is almost a national recreation. In the Western and Southern States you see gambling everywhere. All our cities are cursed with it. Hardly a village is free from it. Not a young man but is exposed to this evil. In San Francisco infamous establishments are fitted up for the purpose. They are called gambling hells. They appear like an earthly heaven—gilded saloons, brilliant with marble, gold, and crimson, attractive with fresco and paintings, and all gorgeous surroundings—the Paradise of gamblers. Public gamb-

ling is now forbidden there by law, but there are many of these gilded dens where men are engaged in "fighting the tiger," as it is called. In New York there are six thousand houses devoted to this sin, and it is said that seven million dollars are annually lost in that city over the gaming table.

1. *Gambling is a transgressing of God's law.*

It is a violation of the eighth Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." Gambling is obtaining property to which the winner has no rightful claim, although the loser does consent to the risk. It is almost invariably associated with fraud.

"Which of the Ten Commandments does gambling break?" asked a young man of his father. The reply was, "None in letter, but the whole law in spirit." The sum of the Commandments is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Gambling excludes all regard for God. The god of the gambler is chance. Here are transactions about which, if he be

ever so anxious, he cannot pray, and over which, if he be ever so successful, he cannot give thanks to God. The gambler cannot love his "neighbor as himself." As well cry to the pitiless storm for mercy; as well ask the hungry wolf to spare the tender lamb, as to ask feeling from the gambler's heart.

2. *It is destructive of industry.*

The man who can make or lose a hundred dollars in a night soon gets disgusted with work—will no longer ply the carpenter's saw, or stand at the forge or the factory wheel, or measure goods or weigh out groceries. The Divine arrangement is gain by work, but gambling is not work. Any trade or occupation that is of use is ennobling, and commerce is carried on on this principle of mutual advantage. When you buy and sell honestly you give and receive an equivalent, so that on both sides there has been gain. But in gambling there is no mutual benefit. Gain to one party means loss to the other. The gambler gives nothing for that

which he takes, and his whole life and being are at war with the industries of society.

3. *It is destructive of health.*

Its intensity consumes. Midnight watchings, the sudden changes from one emotion to another, the hope of success, the fear of failure, the pleasure of gain, the pain of loss, exhaust the whole system. What wonder that this practice has given thousands of patients to our hospitals, thousands of maniacs to our asylums, and thousands of tenants to untimely graves.

4. *It is destructive of property.*

It has brought down great establishments and wealthy firms, and scattered in a night the hard earnings of a life-time. Of those who play for money the ultimate gainers are very few. What instances there are of losses! A young man with a fortune of \$150,000 in less than two years lost every penny. Another young man on coming of age took possession of \$600,000, and in less than three years was brought down to utter destitution by gambling.

The story is told of an English gambler who lost in twelve months one of the best estates in the County of Northumberland. He then put up his horses and carriages and lost them, and went forth beggared. In this wretched condition he was recognized by an old friend, who gave him ten guineas to purchase necessities. He expended five in procuring decent apparel, and with the remaining five he went to a gambling house and increased them to fifty. Then he returned and sat down with his former associates and won \$100,000. But he lost it all and died a beggar in St. Giles.

Driving in Montreal one day a gentleman pointed out to me a neighbor of his who had lost property worth \$200,000, all by gambling.

But, you ask, where does all the money go that is won? It goes into brothels, and grog shops, and all foul places. The proverb is, "lightly come, lightly gone."

5. *It is destructive of morals.*

Tom Brown says, "Gambling finds a man a cully and leaves him a knave." What are the

abominations that accompany gambling?—Intemperance, cursing and swearing, sensuality and avarice. What deceptions and dishonesties in dealing cards, like those practised by that "Heathen Chinee"! A young man from the mines of California went into a gambling hell in San Francisco and won \$20,000. But in the course of the play the tide turns—intense anxiety comes into the countenances of all. Slowly the cards come forth. Not a sound is heard, till the ace is revealed favorable to the house. There are shouts of "foul, foul!" But the keepers produce their pistols, the uproar is silenced, and \$100,000 are swept off the table.

It precipitates its victims into crimes of all kinds—forgery, robbery, murder, despair, madness, suicide. I have no doubt that hundreds of dollars every week from our city leak out of merchants tills into this whirlpool.

In Philadelphia a lady of fashion had formed a card party at her house, and when all were absorbed in the game the lady suddenly fainted and fell under the table. "Stay," said one,

"don't touch the bell, let us finish the game, she would have done so herself." The game lasted another half-hour, and when they rang the bell and called in the doctor he pronounced her to have been dead twenty minutes. The tender mercies of the gambler are cruel. This sin hardens; it rends; it blasts!

6. *It destroys the soul.*

Its steps "take hold on hell, going down to the chambers of death." The infatuated wretch is on the road to destruction, and no pitying voice of a friend, no wife's entreaty, no sister's tears, no mother's prayers can stay his headlong course. The infernal spell is on him, and he rushes to his doom.

II. We turn from this sin of gambling to warn you against the amusement of card playing. Many people ask, "What harm in a pack of cards?" "No more," they say, "than in a package of envelopes. And when no stakes are put up the play is perfectly innocent." There are card parties in professedly Christian homes. Would the Lord Jesus Christ sit down

to such a game? Mr. Romaine, being solicited to play at cards, made no objection, but when they were produced said, "Let us ask the blessing of God." "Ask the blessing of God at a game of cards," exclaimed the lady, "I never heard of such a thing." Mr. Romaine replied, "Ought we to engage in anything on which we cannot ask His blessing." This ended the game.

Now, I am going to offer a few reasons why, as Christians, we should not play cards. I speak from a Christian pulpit, and address a Christian audience—men and women who have been baptized into the covenant of redeemed manhood in Christ Jesus—the disciples of one who pleased not Himself, and who has bidden us "to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." If you are not a Christian, and do not wish to quit the wrong and do the right, or live for heaven and the good of others, then you might as well play cards and run after the world's amusements, as do any other of the devil's

work. If you say, "Young people must have amusements," we answer, Yes, but not amusements that are perverted to immoral uses, or mixed up with dissipation like card playing. If you say, "Young people will be kept out, and driven out of the Church by these strict views on amusements; they must follow the tastes of fashionable society," I answer, If the privilege of playing cards keeps the young out of the Church they ought to be kept out, and if it drives them from Church they ought to be driven out. If men and women are to enter the Church to be worldly-minded professors of religion; to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; to have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; to attempt the impossibility of serving God and mammon, sooner let His blood-washed Church be blotted from the face of the earth than that it should surrender its principles and go over to the enemy. The tide of worldliness is sweeping thousands to perdition, and woe, woe to the Church that does not bear witness for the truth.

1. My first objection to card playing is, that it is "the appearance of evil," and we are commanded to "abstain from all appearance of evil." Cards are the implements of gamblers. Do you say, "It's only in appearance and not in reality; they are only bits of paper with clubs and aces on their face." I answer, The appearance of evil is evil, and at the peril of your soul you are bound to abstain. There will be no sin committed by abstaining; there may be by indulgence.

They are recognized as *at home* in the dens of vice and shame, and in the hands of wicked men and women; and in the proportion of ten to one these people monopolize these games. They have ministered a thousand times more to vice and dissipation than to sweetness of temper, clearness of head, and purity of heart. I know that cards have cursed thousands in this world, and will curse thousands more, and God being my helper they shall never curse my children, with my knowledge or consent, and if my voice can prevent it they shall not curse other house-

holds. That is the position for any Christian to take. And as to there being no harm in the friendly rubber, when nothing is put up except the drinks or a few cents to add interest to the game. Well, what of "Progressive Euchre?" It is respectable gambling indulged in by respectable people. As I understand it, the playing is for a prize, a valuable prize at one end and a booby prize at the other. Some friends in Detroit last winter were going to have a progressive euchre party, and three or four met together in the afternoon to practice. To give spirit to the game the lady at whose home they were took out her diamond earrings and laid them down. They were won by another and she claimed them. That evening the husband was called in to remonstrate, but in vain, and, by way of consolation, said to his wife, "This is the last time I shall ever escort you to a progressive euchre party." Progressive euchre, rightly named, because it is the stepping stone to worse and more fearful departures from God.

2. My second argument is, that it is a worldly amusement. It does not spring from faith in Christ; it does not strengthen our faith, and is not a part of Christian duty. It is worldly in its origin, worldly in its character, worldly in its associations, and worldly in its tendencies, while the injunction to the Christian is, "Be not conformed to this world," for "whosoever will be a friend of this world is the enemy of God." Now, if worldly persons and non-members of the Church want to play cards it is in a line with their professions, but Church members cannot play cards and gamble in their homes—that is, they cannot be Christians and do these things. The Christian is held by a higher law—the new life in Christ Jesus; and the man or woman that pursues the world just as eagerly as others who are purely worldly, may just as well confess that they are hypocrites, for the world knows that they are. You will ask, "What harm in a social game of cards?" Why do you ask it? Do you ever ask, "What harm in family prayer? What harm in going to

prayer-meeting? What harm in visiting the poor and sick?" No. Why? Because you know there is no harm. Why do you ask the other question? Because you know there is harm. It is a *questionable* thing. A Christian that will not sacrifice the fashions, or so-called demands of society, for the good of others; who says, "It is my business to enjoy myself; I do not propose to have my life governed by the Church; I propose to do as I please," is possessed of none of the spirit of Christ.

A young fellow comes to the city. He is thrown into the society of professed Christians and invited to a home. He is asked to join in cards. He says, "Excuse me, my mother is anxious that I should never play cards; she says that while the social game may have nothing essentially evil in it, yet the institution of the card-table is a dangerous thing in society." The Christian gentleman says, "Your mother is puritanical; she is not familiar with the habits of the best society. You must learn to regulate your own conscience, and if you do

not do these things you will lose caste. People will laugh and sneer at you." Under this pressure he yields and plays his first game. What a fascination there is in the game. He sees no harm in it now. He falls under the spell. Every nerve is thrilled; his eyes flash; the fire burns; he is swept away by the habit and goes to ruin. The mother knew why she did not wish him to learn. Her own father had, through the card table, been led down to ruin, and now, unintentionally, this Christian gentleman leads the young man to the devil. Sketch the history of many a blackleg and it will be something like the following:—Learned to play cards at home, or at a neighbor's house; at social gatherings, and at evening parties. Played only for pastime and a desire to be thought sociable. Love for it was gradually excited, and he began to enjoy a friendly rubber. He thought there was no harm in it, as the stakes were very small. The excitement increased. When a loser, he wanted to win back; when a winner, he was ready to stake more. Attended a weekly card-meeting; began

to play with strangers and for larger sums. Often out all night; learned to drink; to enjoy lewd jests and profane oaths. Playing now became desperate, and borrowing, thieving, robbing, and open crime were the results, and that once moral young man, the child of pious parents, is an outcast; and the gray hair that should have been honored and protected are brought down with sorrow to the grave.

The idea of sacrificing for others is not a law of this world. Worldly people cannot appreciate it; worldly Christians cannot understand it. But I cannot be a follower of Christ and not be willing to give up a useless thing, the tendency of which is to evil. Unless the Bible is a fable, Christians are called to be "holy," "to be separated from the world," and if they are not known in their associations and companionships from the world, then are they Christians?

3. My third argument is, that the card-table is utterly inconsistent with the duties, privileges, and tastes of true Christians; that it destroys their influence, and is an injury to

those who are not disciples of Christ. If card-playing is proper for one Church member is it not proper for another? it is proper for me, the minister, for my class-leaders and Sunday-school teachers. If it is not proper for me it is not proper for any member. The Saviour claims from every child of God his love, his services, his self-denying consecration. Do these card-playing members have family prayer? do they attend prayer-meeting, visit and pray with the sick? Are they spiritually-minded? Do they do anything that Christians ought to do? How many genuinely-scriptural, devoted, pious men and women in this city play cards? How many pure, earnest, consecrated, and self-sacrificing Church members play cards? I tell you that you could sink every card-playing, wine-bibbing, dancing Church member into the bottom of the bay and not a church would suffer one iota spiritually by their loss. They may shine at social parties, and be leaders of fashion, but they simply count zero in the Church.

It destroys their influence. Suppose that

every member in the Church were like them, what kind of a Church would we have? I am glad that the world thinks more of Christ, and more of Christianity, than to let Church members do as it does without throwing it in their teeth, and telling them to their face, "We believe you are hypocrites."

Did you ever hear of a convicted sinner sending for one of this kind of Christians to inquire from him the way of salvation? or of a dying sinner sending for one of them to hear from his lips the words of comfort and of prayer? Never!

It is a source of injury to those who are not Christians. It is not the lying, thieving, and drunken members of a church that do most harm—every body knows that those things are bad—it is these amusement-loving members; these respectable people who are in a tide of worldliness which paralyzes their Christian life, and makes people say, "There is nothing at all in religion." The world after all has a contempt for those Christians who advocate card-

playing and the like. It asks, "Why don't they keep their vows and promises made to God and His Church? They have promised to renounce the devil and his works—the vain pomp and glory of this world. Why do they not do it?"

What a man does is the test of what he is. And the man who prays in his family, does his duty to God, and lives righteously before the community, does not do these things. For these reasons, have no feeling with the unfruitful works of darkness; do not countenance them; do not become an apologist for them; do not aid or abet them. Take your stand for God and the right. Let nothing that has ever harmed a soul, or cursed humanity, be fostered in your home or by your example. Down with it, and out with it forever!

This will not please some of you. Well, thank God I do not preach to please people who think more of their worldly amusements than of poor, tempted, perishing men! Sorry members of any Church they are. If you do not like what I have said, then you are wrong. If

I have erred, it has been on the safe side, and I would rather keep too far from the world than go too near it.

There is not one of you who will not say, as you are honest before God in the light of death, and judgment and eternity, the preacher is right, and you will have a thousand times more respect for the man who speaks out boldly and freely his reproofs, than for the man who will connive at the worldliness of his members, and allow them to go on as they please in their doubtful courses.

There is danger in cards wherever they are played. They have but one good use. A young man that had learned to play bought a pack and showed them to an old player who had spent most of his life in this senseless employment. He fingered them over familiarly and then said, "You had better go home and burn them." Such advice from such a source made a deep impression upon the young man, and he went and burned them, and never played again. Do you know that the flame of

Methodism on this continent started from a pack of burning cards. Some backslidden Methodists (and wherever you find a Methodist playing cards you can set him down as a backslider) in New York were playing cards, when Barbara Heck caught up the cards and threw them into the fire, and said to one of the players, a local preacher—Philip Embury—if you do not preach to us we shall all go to hell together, and God will require our blood at your hands." The words went straight to his heart and he prayed to God for forgiveness, began to preach, and now fifteen millions on this continent call him blessed. My hearer, if you have a pack of cards I pray you burn them.

Young man, my brother, stand back from the card table. Some of you are strangers to the play. Never learn—here is safety. Keep your hands pure. Keep them off every instrument of gaming. Whoever asks you, saint or sinner, to take a game at cards, say No! However polite or elegant the circle, they are doing the devil's work.

And heads of households—fathers, mothers, wives, and sisters what can you do to check this evil? Make your home and social circle pure. Learning your children to use cards at home will but pave the way to immoral uses in immoral places. Give up your whist, and euchre, and friendly rubber. O you sisters, and wives, and mothers, how can you help to bind the chain of sinful habits around your brothers, and husbands, and sons?

And you that are in the snare, give it up. Do it immediately. For the sake of your body, soul, and spirit; for the sake of God, and Christ, and Heaven, give it up at once and forever. Disgrace and ruin stare you in the face. Do you say, "No danger of me." Are you any stronger than thousands who have fallen? You are on the down grade, and the end thereof is death. Escape for life; flee to the mountains; hasten to Jesus. He can save you from your evil habits; from sin in all its forms and consequences. He waits to be gracious. He has anxiously followed you, and

though your sins rise up as mountains He can purge them all away in His atoning blood. Oh, how great your Heavenly Father's love and how He longs to save you! Mr. Moody tells that in the days before railroads, when they used to bring the grain from the prairies to Chicago in waggons, there was a father who had a large farm—a good man and a local preacher. One day when business engaged him he sent his son to Chicago with grain. He waited for his boy to return, but he did not come. So he came in on horseback and rode to the place where his son had sold the grain. Found he had been there and got the money. And then he began to fear that his boy had been robbed and murdered. At last, with the aid of a detective, they tracked him to a gambling den, where they found that he had gambled away the whole of his money. In hopes of winning it back he had sold his team, and lost that. What could he do? He had fallen among thieves, and now they had robbed him; he was ashamed to go home and meet his father,

and he fled. What did the father do? Did he say, "Let the boy go?" No; he went home, told his wife of their son's fall, arranged his business and started after his boy. He went from town to town, from city to city; would get permission to preach, and at the close he would tell his story. "I have got a boy that is a wanderer on the face of this earth somewhere." He would describe him, and say, "If you ever hear of him or see him will you not write to me." On he went, thousands of miles, away to the Pacific Coast. He went to San Francisco, and advertised in the newspapers that he would preach in such a church on such a day. He preached and told his story in hopes that the boy might have seen the advertisement and come to the church. When he had done, away under the gallery was a young man who waited until the audience had gone out, then he came towards the pulpit. The father saw that it was his boy, and ran to him and pressed him to his bosom. The son wanted to confess what he had done, but the

father would not hear a word. He forgave him freely and took him to his home once more. So you will be welcomed home to your Heavenly Father's love if you will but say, "I will arise and go to my father."

"Return, O wanderer, now return,
And seek thy Father's face ;
Those new desires that in thee burn,
Were kindled by His grace.

Return, O wanderer, now return,
And wipe the falling tear ;
Thy Father calls, no longer mourn,
'Tis love invites thee near."





SERMON III.

SHALL WE OR SHALL WE NOT DANCE?

“A time to weep, and a time to laugh ; a time to mourn,
and a time to dance.”—*Ecc. iii. 4.*

“**T**O every thing,” says the Preacher,
“there is a season, and a time to
every purpose under the heaven.”

Earthly enjoyments and pursuits are lawful in
their proper time and place. Emotions of joy
and sorrow universally express themselves in
movements and gestures. Dancing, as symboli-
cal of joy, is often in Scripture coupled with

mourning for the sake of contrast. Dancing is defined as a graceful movement of the figure, accompanied by measured steps in accord with music. Now, the act of dancing, the mere movement in itself, cannot be sinful. It has no moral character whatever. As a muscular motion it is just as harmless for me to dance across this platform as to walk across it or to run across it. But we have nothing to do with it in the abstract. It is with the dance as a fashionable amusement, and with its unavoidable adjuncts, that we have to do.

The subject is worthy of our most careful consideration. The question of amusements is forcing itself upon the attention of the Church, and the minister who has a conscience, who feels that this is a question of morals, must speak out boldly and kindly his convictions, and seek to bring his hearers to a right conscience, and a right practice, on all matters bearing upon their present and everlasting destiny.

We start with the assumption that recreations are necessary. We believe in play as

well as work. The man who never unbends, never relaxes, becomes a drudge, and is dwarfed in power. But amusements are liable to perversion. The law must be, not dissipation but recreation—physical, mental, and moral. The purpose of play is “to increase our capacity for work, to keep the blood pure, the brain bright, and the temper kindly and sweet.” No amusement is allowable that is not healthful, free from every taint of impurity, or that absorbs an undue proportion of time, thought, and expense. We believe it is the duty of the Church to approve what is innocent, and condemn what is bad everywhere. Pleasures that are helpful and harmless, that accord with reason and Scripture, true science, and true faith, she must make the handmaids of virtue and helps to piety, while those that are vicious and harmful, that unfit for the essential duties of a Christian life, whose trend is toward dissipation, must be handed over to the devil and his followers—“the lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” What, then, is the voice of

reason and of Scripture in reference to this most fascinating and popular of amusements? Many say that they see no harm whatever in the dance, and there are ministers who think the subject of too trifling importance to be seriously noticed, and that, too, when they know that worldliness is honey-combing the very life of the Church. We will look at the dance just as it exists in society, and present it to the judgment of your intelligent, practical, Christian common sense. Give us a fair hearing.

You know that when a speaker makes an inroad on anything that is fashionable he has to meet prejudice; he is going to be called strait-laced and fanatical. If I strike hard against lying, the liars will not like it. If I preach against drink, the drinkers grow angry. If I preach against dishonesty, every one who does not pay his debts thinks it pretty hard; and so, I cannot strike these questionable things that members of the Church do, without hearing an outcry from those who indulge in them.

(1) The text tells us that there is "a time

to dance" as an *expression of joy*—a "time to mourn, and a time to dance." The Hebrew רָקַד (*raw'-kad*) simply means to skip or leap for joy. The skipping lamb, the gleeful child, let them jump and beat the ground; it is natural, it is innocent. Let youth, with its gushing vivacity, ring out the merry laugh, and with bounding freedom trip over the meadow, or sport on the lawn—there is a time *thus* to dance.

(2) "A time to dance" as an expression of *religious joy*. Heathen nations have their dances, from the shameless choric round dance of the Greeks, accompanied by the grossest indecencies, in honor of their god Bacchus, and the Roman festival of the goddess Flora, with its licentious pageantry, down to the dances of our Indian tribes. In South Africa the phrase, "What do you dance?" means "What tribe do you belong to?" for, according to Livingstone, each tribe has its peculiar dance. The Hebrews had their sacred dances, and as an act of worship David danced before the Lord. So

Jephthah's daughter met her father with a troop of maidens ; and on the prodigal's return there was religious festivity—music and dancing. In our day the Shakers dance as a religious act. Now, the dance of society is not for light-hearted children in the open air, or for men and women in worship. People do not now praise God in the dance. They do not ask Him to vouchsafe His presence in the dance. They do not open with prayer, return thanks for the privilege at the close, or dismiss with the benediction.

The Scriptures, then, give no sanction to the dance of society. Dr. Lyman Beecher, in his celebrated tract on Dancing, issued by the American Tract Society, after carefully examining every text that alludes to the subject, comes to the following conclusion:—1. That dancing was a religious act both of the true and also of idol worship. 2. That it was practiced exclusively on joyful occasions and in the day time. 3. That men who perverted dancing from a sacred use to purposes of amusement were deemed infamous. 4. That no instances of dancing are

found upon record in the Bible, in which the two sexes united in the exercise, either as an act of worship or amusement. 5. That there is no instance upon record of social dancing for amusement, except that of the "vain fellows" devoid of shame; of the irreligious families described by Job, which produced increased impiety and ended in destruction; and of Salome, the daughter of the infamous Herodias, who exhibited her person as she led the mazy dance in the saloons of Machærus, which terminated in the rash vow of Herod and the murder of John the Baptist.

People say, "The pleasure dance is right, for does not the Bible say there is a time to dance?" The desperate man will seize the sword-edge of his adversary even though it wound himself the more deeply. The Bible says there is "a time to hate, and a time to kill," and on such reasoning hatred and murder are right.

First—Consider this popular amusement in its relation to health. An amusement ought, at least, to be a healthy exercise. Now, in the

open air and during the day, with the dress not too tight or too light, dancing might be health-giving ; but for a physical exercise to commence at nine or ten o'clock at night, and last till after midnight in an indoor atmosphere, heated and impure, followed by exposure to the cold damp air of early morning, is certainly something that physicians do not often recommend to their patients. If this were so, then a round of balls might be regarded as a good sanitary measure ; and if we knew that six or eight thousand of our young people were attending dancing assemblies nightly we might hope for an increased measure of public health. Late hours for exhausted business-men, leg-weary clerks, and delicate young ladies ; midnight feastings, crowded, heated rooms, impure air, exhaustion to the point of fatigue, with sudden exposure to cold—if these are the conditions of healthy amusements, then, pray what are the conditions of unhealthy ones ? The plea of health will have to be given up ; it is too absurd.

Second—Consider the dance in relation to

expense. This is a matter which touches eternity, for every man is a steward and must give an account of how he has used his Lord's money. To be extravagant in amusements, to spend money on the vanity of a passing hour, and the rivalry of display, when so many are in want, ignorance and degradation, and every noble work impoverished, is a sinful waste of means. Now, the dance and the ultras of dress and extravagant display are sworn companions. The dance is a spectacle, and everything in the way of glitter, vanity, ornaments and dress are needed to set off the scenic effect. Many, going beyond their means, add dishonesty to dissipation, and go in debt or thief. You say, "That's true of balls; I condemn them; but smaller dancing parties are not liable to this abuse." Well, what about the "baby balls," where little darlings that ought to be in bed are decked out in kid gloves, jewels and silks, and put upon the stilts of fashion to ape the manners of older people? An outrage against the simplicity, the innocence, the health and happiness of children. The

truth is, that the customs of dress, etc., are handed down from the ball-room to the private parlor dance ; the smaller are only feeders to the larger, for all rivers run into the sea. A gentleman of high standing said to me the other day, " Now, I've seen more immodesty in the dress of women in our parlors than in ballet girls on the stage." That style of dress which often leaves modest men at some loss what to do with their eyes takes its start from London or Parisian high life, and goes down corrupting the very blood of our civilization.

Third—Glance at the social tendency of this amusement, and its influence on mental improvement. Social life does not consist in the mere herding together of human beings, but in the interchange of thoughts and feelings. The mere congregating of men and women in corporeal movements, where ten consecutive words need not be spoken, is not social but gregarious. And this is why dancing is so often resorted to. People do not stop to ask whether it is consistent with their professions ; but they want to pay off

a number of social obligations, and so they get up a grand party, clear the floor, provide the piper and the caterer, and the dance runs itself.

The dance is claimed to be a "school of manners;" it is so refining, and gives such grace and dignity. Is true grace purely physical? Shakespeare well says—

"They bid us to the English dancing-schools,
And teach lavoltas high, and swift curantos,
Saying our grace is only in our heels."

Are all but dancers unrefined? Then I pity some of my hearers, whose very proportions would exclude them from polished circles, for to see them on the floor would remind you of the "waltzing of an elephant." Yet how their quiet dignity would confound the puppet manners of many a one who can whirl in what Byron calls "the not too lawfully begotten waltz." What of Cicero, who declares that "No one dances unless he is either drunk or a fool!" or of Daniel Webster, who, when asked by a dandy why he did not dance, replied, "Sir, I never had the ambition or the talents to

learn the art." Professedly Christian mothers send their children to a dancing-school to learn manners, as though the affectation of a pert miss in the set of the foot or the angle of the limbs could be compared with the natural grace of a pure girl, or the manly walk of an ingenuous youth.

The dance a "school of manners!" Then the most skilled in the accomplishment should be the chief ornaments of society. It is so in everything else. The best music from the best musicians; the best teaching from the best professors; then, the most elegant manners from the dancing-master—the little French dancing-master! What a pattern of manly carriage! The beau-ideal of a gentleman, the dancing-master! Why, he is not considered respectable enough to enter the very society which he instructs in manners!

As to its effects on mental culture, it is always found where there is most of superficial refinement and shallow frivolity. How we are forced to lament the decline of the art of

conversation—young people unable to entertain each other in the interchange of views on books and topics of absorbing interest. Is it any wonder, when we set up as a fashionable standard an exercise in which monkeys can be trained to rival us ?

A Chinaman seeing for the first some European officers "bobbing round" in the whirl of the dance, called one of them aside, and said, "Pray, why don't you let your servants do that for you !" But you ask, "Is it not better to dance than to resort to silly, osculatory games, or talk scandal of your neighbor ?" Yes, it is. It is better to steal than to commit murder ; but those who do not steal are not thereby obliged to commit murder, so those who do not dance are not obliged to slander their neighbors.

Fourth—Look now at the dance in its moral aspects. By moral we mean what is fit and proper. And what is proper for anybody is proper for me ; for what is forbidden to the Christian must, in the nature of the case, be forbidden to all. We have charged the dance

with being injurious to health and leading to extravagance. We say now that it is improper; there is about it an unhealthy fascination—the kindling of an unhallowed fire. You have all heard about the bewitching character of the *dancé*, and some of you may have felt the strange spell. Let us analyze it. (1) There is the intoxication of the senses, the thrill of music and the poetry of motion. Put these together and the fascination is like a possession. Why, in some parts of Africa, along the Gold Coast, it is a perfect rage. Men and women cannot hear an instrument played and refrain from dancing and there are well-attested stories of these negroes throwing themselves at the feet of a European fiddler, begging him to stop or he would tire them to death, for they could not stop dancing while he continued playing.

(2) Another secret charm about the dance is, it is an appeal to vanity and personal display. Let the dancer be told that her movements are as awkward as a cow and clumsy as a bear, and she would prefer being pinned up as a

wall-flower ; but as long as there is the admiration of her grace and charms she will dance on.

(3) There is another fatal fascination in its wanton whirls. We have no hesitation in pronouncing the "round dances" and the "voluptuous movements of the waltz" as immoral and disgraceful. Fashion is a fool and a fiend that will take these importations from Paris brothels, and then, under cover of respectability, dare to mingle the sexes in such closeness of contact as, outside the dance, would nowhere be tolerated in decent society.

Understand me: thousands permit these things unconsciously and with a purity that is as white as the driven snow. But it is these wanton whirls that make the dance an enemy to public morality, so that Dr. Crosby says, "Three-fourths of the abandoned girls in New York were ruined by dancing;" and the New York police a short time ago traced the downfall of one hundred and fifty women to dancing in their mothers' parlors. Sex is the spirit of the dance, just as alcohol is the spirit of intoxicat-

ing beverages. We say not a word against the dance if men and women would dance separately, but let them do this and the amusement would die of galloping consumption.

Fifth—Now we come to the Christian aspect. May we as Christians dance? And, for several reasons, we answer "No!"

(1) It has been condemned by all the Churches, and by the good in all the Churches. Do you say, "Our church does not object." The little thing that you belong to may not, but there is not a Church named after Christ on earth that has not thundered against it. What does the Roman Catholic Church of America say, through the pastoral letters of the archbishops and bishops? "The fashionable dances as now carried on are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest danger to morals." That Church with its confessional knows whereof it speaks. What does the Church of England say to its members, through its noblest bishops? It reminds them of their solemn vows, and says, that

no ingenuity can make dancing consistent with the covenant of baptism. Bishop Cox speaking of the lasciviousness of the dance says, "It is high time that the lines should be drawn between worldly and godly living." Presbyterian Synods and Assemblies have declared that the practice of dancing by professed Christians is clearly forbidden by the spirit of the Gospel, and condemned by the Confession of Faith. Dr. Palmer, of New Orleans, says, "Round dancing between the sexes is demoralizing. Nor is it a sufficient answer to say that multitudes dance who are never conscious of any improper associations. It might not be safe for many whose character is above suspicion, even to themselves, to make too nice an analysis of the pleasures they experience in the dance." Dr. Albert Barnes says, "No child dances into heaven, but many a one dances into hell." Now, this attitude of the Church is entitled to some weight. What good men have generally shrank from and condemned must have some evil in it. Now, after this, what

will you think of some light-headed young person who sets up his judgment against the deliberate judgment of the best and greatest and says, "It is my opinion that there is no harm in dancing?"

(2) Another reason is that it is a worldly amusement, and is indulged in only by worldly-minded Christians. The dance is the chosen and chief form of the world's pursuit of worldly pleasures; but Christians are to be "separated" from the world. Can they, then, dance without compromising their Christian character? Supposing you should go out some bright moonlight night and toss a kiss to the moon. "A very innocent act," you say. But suppose you lived among fire-worshippers, where such an act would be moon-worship, you would then, with the patriarch Job, recoil with horror from such an act, for he says, "If I beheld the moon walking in brightness, and my mouth hath kissed my hand, this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the God that is above." To be found

joining in the dance is to deny the Christ, the Redeemer of the world; for "to be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of Christ." I am a member of His Church. How can I bring reproach and shame upon the name and cause of Christ?

In every church you will find generally two distinct classes. One class is composed of those who are always found in their places in the sanctuary; they teach in the Sunday-school; keep up the prayer-meetings; visit the sick and troubled; do all spiritual work, and make personal efforts for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom. The other class is composed of those who have made a profession of religion; they are nominal members, but that is all. They are not spiritual, earnest, consecrated.

Now, which of these classes do you as rule find defending and practising dancing? Suppose that as a Christian you are now contending for this amusement. Has not the fervor of your first love cooled? Have you not been neglecting your private duties? In a word,

does not your heart testify that you are a backslider?

Dr. Brooks tells of a young man who was arraigned before his church session on four charges—dancing, attending the theatre, intoxication, and profanity. He confessed that he had done wrong in going to the theatre, in becoming intoxicated, and in using profane language, but he emphatically declared that he did not see any harm in dancing and would not forsake it. They were ready to take action, but the pastor begged for delay. He had a long and earnest interview with him, and at the next session he came in penitence and said that dancing was the worst of all his offences, because it was so insidious, and had led him on step by step to the other sins. Can you afford, as a professed Christian, to bring a stain upon the family of God, and the name of Christ? You know why the ermine is worn by the judge as a type of stainless integrity. The little animal, with its hair and skin as white as the driven snow, will not stain or soil itself

and the way they capture it is to mark its course, and sprinkle mud or dirt along its pathway home, and when the little ermine comes to this mud and dirt it will lie down and submit to capture and death before it will smirch or soil one of its snow-white hairs. O child of the King, will you smirch your character as a Christian by joining in the dance ?

(3) My third reason is that it stands in the way of so many becoming Christians ; that your indulgence will most likely lead you to make shipwreck of faith. How many say, "I would join the Church, but I cannot give up the dance !" They will stifle the convictions of conscience and dance along the way to ruin. An aged pastor tells of a young lady who had given up her gaiety, and set her face Zionward. In an evil hour some of her former associates called on her to accompany them to a ball. She at first refused to go, but with persuasion and ridicule they prevailed, and with a desperate effort to shake off her convictions and regain

her former security, she exclaimed, "Well, I will go if I am damned for it!" She went, the blessed Spirit withdrew His influences, and she became the victim of despair. Then came the wan and sunken cheek, and the ravages of death. The pastor called to visit her, and proposed prayer. The word threw her into an agony. She utterly refused. No entreaties of friends, no arguments drawn from the love of God, or the Saviour's pity, could shake her resolution, and she went out of life into the blackness of darkness.

In a beautiful town was the home of an only child of a wealthy man. She was the idol of her father. Graceful as a fairy, dancing was her passion. Frail of body and feeble, yet she would dance, while with one hand she had to support her aching side. New Year's came, and she was gaily attired for an evening party. She danced with her suitor, the fairest of the fair. Midnight came, and heated with dancing she sat down at an open window and breathed the chill winter air. Just then, the minstrels struck up a live-

lier strain, and seizing her partner's hand she rushed again upon the floor, and in a moment was the wildest dancer there. The music grew stronger, the revelry wilder, until an unearthly shriek rang out in that place of mirth, and the fairest of the dancers fell senseless in the arms of her partner. They bore her to the window with the blood pouring from her mouth. They chafed her temples, and sought to restore her. At last she opened her eyes upon the anxious faces around her, and said, "I have danced my body into the grave and my soul into hell," and breathed her last. The dead body was carried home, and with that form there went into the mansion of the rich father a more awful woe as he remembered the last words of his idol-child. She had gained pleasure, but what consolation, what remuneration, to dance a thousand times and then go to perdition !

The amusement is wholly inconsistent with the spirit of Christ and with a spiritual state of mind, and to be mingling with the unconverted in their pleasures, and running after amusements

is to prove that we either never were Christians or have sadly fallen from grace. It requires neither good brains, good morals, nor true religion to be a good dancer, and you might as well look for buds and flowers with the atmosphere at zero as for great dancers among eminent Christians.

A young lady of high social standing was hopefully converted, and decided to join the Church. Before doing so, she went to the pastor, and asked: "If I join the Church, have you any objection to my dancing? I am very fond of it, and feel very unwilling to give it up. What do you think of it?"

"I will answer your question by another," said her pastor. "Suppose there was a large and fashionable party or a public ball in town, and you were invited to it. And suppose you had accepted the invitation, and that, going at rather a late hour, as you entered the room you found all engaged in the dance, and that you saw me, your pastor, taking part in it, and leading it, what would you think?"

A look of surprise, almost of astonishment, passed over her face, as she frankly said, "I should think it very strange, and greatly inconsistent."

"Well," replied the minister, "if dancing is right and a good thing, why should not I enjoy it as well as you? And if in its influence and tendencies it is wrong and evil, why should you engage in it or wish it more than I? A minister is but a good man trying to do good to men. And there are not two standards, one for him and another for the members of his Church; not two rules of Christian living, one for you and another for him. If he is to be spiritual, and set a holy example, and to come out from the world and be separate, and shun worldly amusements, why are not you? And if such amusements are right and proper for you as a follower of the Saviour, why are they not for him? And why should you, or any member of the Church, wish to be or do what you would not like to see him be or do?"

She thought a moment seriously, and then

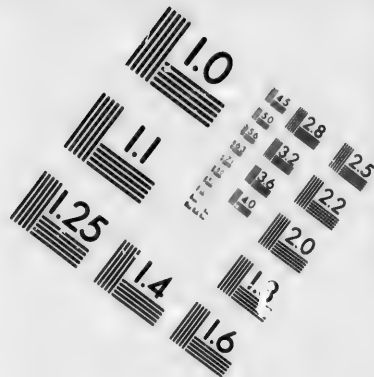
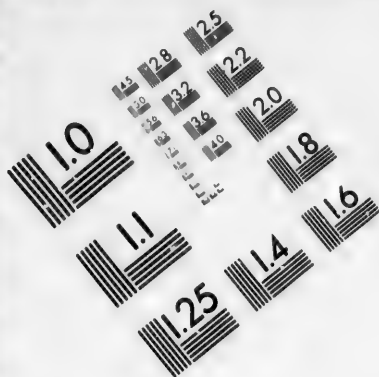
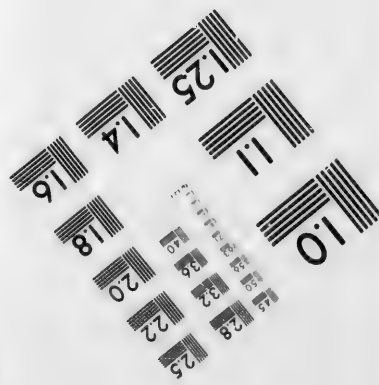
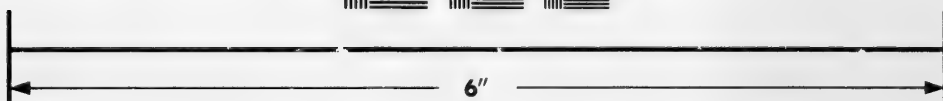
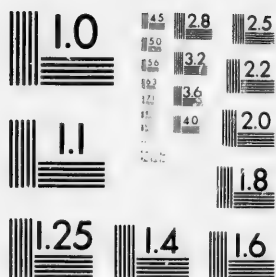


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said: "It is plain to me now. I will never dance again." And she never did.

There are some who say, "We admit all that you have said about the round dances, but why do you object to the square?" Simply because the square dance cannot be kept square, but is sure to be rounded off at the corners with the waltz. I know of homes where Sir Roger de Coverly was introduced simply for the children, but he soon galloped in all the others. The round dance is just what the fashionable world will not have discriminated away, and those who want to be fashionable in the Church will adopt the same loose views and practices. Others say, "We admit the evils of excess; but why object to private parlor dancing?" Simply because it sanctions the dance in other places. Strike a rattle-snake on the head wherever you find it; but you say, "Cut off the head of the big rattle-snake, but only the tail of the little one." That is just where this evil is intrenched. You consent to the dance and then fix the boundary if you can. As

Bishop McIlvaine says, "The only line to be drawn is that of entire exclusion." If the prevailing tendency of the private parlor dance is to evils of the same character that we all condemn in the more public and promiscuous form ; if the relations of the more private and the more public be such as to compromise the one with the other, how can I countenance the one while I admit the evils of the other ? It is best never to begin a doubtful practice. And for Christian parents to introduce the dance, the cards and the wine glass into the home to make it attractive for the children, is just to create an appetite that may lead them to ruin. What a sugar-coated pill of poison ! O ! the anguish of the father when his drunken boy says, " You gave me the first glass of wine," or his gambling son, " You taught me the first game of cards," or of the mother, when the daughter says, " It was dancing at home that led me into this folly and ruin." A spiritual mind cannot seek enjoyment in worldly society. All this trouble comes from wanting to be like others and follow fashion.

Society is insincere and hollow, is in the service of the god of this world ; and to deny the blessed Lord who bought us with His blood, ruin our children, lose all communion with God and become worldly-minded professors of religion for the sake of society, is to plant a thorn in our dying pillow, and not only imperil the souls of others but our own immortality. I know the difficulty of parents from the pressure on every side, but Christian firmness with Christian character, and an intelligent, reasonable setting forth of all these doubtful tendencies and abuses will keep the home pure. It may cost something of prayer, something of effort and of tears to keep back your child, feverish after worldly pleasures, and wake up the better and purer nature ; but, O father ! O mother ! these cords will draw, and one glance of your redeemed child in heaven, one hour's sweet converse there, will overpay you all the toil, and anxiety and restraint of your often unwise parental indulgence.

My hearer, are you still unpardoned and

unsaved. Then the dance is no place for you. How can you make merry in your sins when the noose is about your neck and the drop is under your feet. The pious Hervey once travelled in a railway coach with a lady who was speaking of the pleasures of the dance. "Pray what are they madam?" "Three, sir—pleasure before in anticipating pleasure during it in enjoyment, and pleasure after in retracing it." "You have omitted one more yet to be realized, madam." "What is that, sir?" "The pleasure which the retrospect must afford you when laid on a death-bed." The truth pierced her heart, and she left the dance forever to those who care not how they may die.

You have all heard of Napoleon's campaign against Russia in 1812; the evacuation of Moscow and the burning of the city while occupied by the French troops. The very night of the conflagration a military levee was held in a deserted palace, in the vault of which was deposited, unknown to the officers, a large quantity of gunpowder. The scene was a

brilliant one, and the gayest were there. During the revelry the fire rapidly swept on, and time after time they would leave their amusement to watch the march of the flame-demon. At length the adjacent buildings were on fire, and the necessity for leaving became apparent to all. They prepared for rapid flight, when Carnot, an officer, young and brave, waved his jewelled hand above his head and exclaimed, "One dance more and defiance to the flames!" The enthusiasm was caught up and from lip to lip the cry went forth, "One dance more and defiance to the flames!" The dance recommenced, high swelled the music, fast fell the footsteps of dancing men and women, when suddenly they heard the alarming call, "The magazine's on fire! fly, fly for life!" They stood transfixed with horror. They knew not that the magazine was there, and suddenly the vault exploded, and with the shattered building the gay revellers fell.

My hearer, the eternal flames are rolling on. Before you is death, judgment and eternity.

Will you dance on while at any moment the magazine of the universe may explode, and amid a burning world the Son of Man appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory? We preach Christ not as pleasing men, but God, and call you to holiness of heart and life, "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."





SERMON IV.

SHALL WE OR SHALL WE NOT ATTEND THE THEATRE?

"For the tree is known by its fruit."—Matt. xii. 33.

QUR Lord here proposes to test things by their results. The tree is back of, or antecedent to, the fruit and determines its character; the heart is back of the life, and moulds it. Everywhere the law holds good: "By their fruits ye shall know them." We ought to bring the keen edge of this truth to bear upon every aspect of society.

And if ever this solemn utterance of the Master should be brought home to men in all relations of life it is now. The mightiest social forces are in the white heat of action. Institutions utterly demoralizing are in full blast, and broadening the sweep of their influence. What of the theatre? Does it do good or harm? It is very popular and daring in its claims for attendance and support. Its monster hand-bills stare us in every conspicuous place. The columns of daily papers give enthusiastic notices of theatrical performances. Picture-galleries and shop windows are filled with the photographs of star actors and actresses ranged side by side with eminent statesmen and divines.

Let us apply the test of our text:—

Is the fruit of this social tree good or evil? The theatre is a tremendous power for good or harm—which? We are all interested in the answer. As fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, professional men and business men, members of society and Christians, we are interested. If it is for good, let us stand by it;

and let ministers and class-leaders and deacons support it, and take their families to enjoy its advantages. If it be evil—hostile to public virtue, pernicious and corrupting in its influences—then, every right-thinking man and woman should denounce it, forsake it, and have “no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”

In discussing the question whether we shall or shall not attend the theatre, let me say—

(1) It is with the theatre as it is, and not as it might be or ought to be, that we have to do. The institution must be judged by what it is and not by what some one imagines it might be made to be. It must stand or fall by what it can do for itself. The ideal stage is out of the question. Apologists seldom defend the stage for what it is, but theorize about the possibility of making it contribute to the advancement of morality. But the theatre is not a time-reforming but a *time-serving* institution. As a well-known Chicago manager says, “The popular taste, whatever that be, must be gratified, if theatres

are to exist." It must always, therefore, come down—it must pander."

Yet Mr. Henry Irving, in his famous Edinburgh address on "the stage as it is," said, "The stage is intellectually and morally to *all* who have recourse to it, the source of some of the finest and best influences of which they are respectively susceptible;" and in saying this, he declared he was speaking "not of any lofty imagination of what might be, but of what is, wherever there are pit, gallery and footlights." That is clear enough language. Some theatres are worse than others, but wherever there are pit, gallery and footlights, theatre-goers "get the finest and best influences" from them.

(2) Nor are we speaking of the abuses of the theatre. There are attendant evils upon trades and professions. There are bad ministers, disreputable doctors, lying merchants and tradesmen, but never in sufficient numbers to make these occupations disreputable. There are attendant evils upon the press, the schools and our very churches; but good is their natural and

general effect, and evil the incidental. Now, we say of the stage, that it does more harm than good—that good is the incidental, evil the natural and general effect. The Church has always stood opposed to the theatre. Why? Because the stage has always been inimical to virtue and a school of immorality; that is its natural outcome. You cannot call drunkenness a proof of the abuse of dramshops. That is what they exist for—to make drunkards. You cannot call desolated homes, burning cities and fields covered with the slain, the abuse of war; so you cannot call the evils clustering around the stage in its regular operation its abuses. And so, with Pollock, we have to say:

“ The theatre was from the very first,
 The favorite haunt of sin, though honest men—
 Some very honest, wise, and worthy men—
 Maintained it might be turned to good account;
 And so perhaps it might but never was.
 From first to last it was an evil place;
 And now such things are acted there, as make
 The devils blush; and from the neighborhood,
 Angels and holy men, trembling, retire.”

(3) Nor must we confound the stage with the

drama. The drama belongs to literature and must be judged by its literary and moral character. The stage is only one mode of teaching the drama or a very small portion of it. Why! the book of Job is a drama; Solomon's Song is a drama; so are Milton's *Comus*, *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Lost*. Many of the choicest gems of literature are cast in dramatic form. They are read and studied by thousands who never think of entering the theatre. Dr. Johnson maintains that even Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted. John Foster says, "No question can be more easily decided than whether it be lawful to write and read useful and ingenious things in dramatic form; but it is an altogether different question whether the stage is a useful means of entertainment and moral instruction." So different a question is it, that the stage may be as injurious as the drama is beneficial. The theatre, then, cannot take to itself the credit of the drama, and it is misleading for our dailies to give reports of theatrical entertainments under the head of the "drama."

The author of "Obiter Dicta," in a very able article on Actors, says, "Our dramatic literature is our greatest, and the study of such works by the actor might have been expected to produce great intellectual if not moral results. But what are the facts—the ugly, hateful facts? Why, despite this great advantage, the taste of actors, their critical judgment, has always been and still is far below the average intelligence of the day." He instances Salvini, who thinks as the result of his study of Shakespeare that the sleep-walking scene ought to be assigned to Macbeth instead of to his wife. The devotees of the stage have taught us nothing. The actor is Art's slave and not her child. Actors first ignored Shakespeare, then mutilated him, and now in their heart of hearts they love him not; for with a light step and smiling face our greatest living tragedian flings aside Hamlet's tunic and Shylock's gaberdine to revel in the melodramatic glories of "The Bells" and "The Corsican Brothers." He says, "Irving may act Hamlet well or ill, but behind his and every-

body's Hamlet, there looms up a greater than them all—the real Hamlet." He accounts for this bad taste by the fact that for the purposes of an ambitious actor bad plays are the best. As far as the drama is concerned, our gratitude is due to men of letters, not to actors. If it be asked, What have actors to do with literature and criticism? I answer, *Nothing*, and that is my case. Yet you will hear the dude and dudine talking about going to enjoy the *drama*. The creatures would far rather hear "Mother Goose."

I. *Consider the record of the theatre.* The stage has a history which stretches over twenty-five centuries. What record has it made for itself? It arose among the Greeks, from the choral songs and dances with which the feasts of Bacchus and Venus, confederate devils of intemperance and lust, were celebrated. At first the stage was a perambulating cart, and the actors were mountebanks and clowns. Then came Thespis introducing tragedy. Æschylus carried the Greek drama upward, and Sophocles was the

ancient Shakespeare. Under Euripides there came a more degenerate taste, and more loose morality; and the comedies of Aristophanes exhibited at once the depravity of the poet and the libertinism of the spectators. Solon, the great law-giver, prohibited them as pernicious to the popular morals. Plato said, "Plays raised the passions, and were dangerous to morality." In the days of Roman virtue and prosperity the theatre was prohibited; but as the nation plunged into excess theatres flourished, until in the days of Nero they were covered with gold. Ovid advised their suppression, and Cicero and Seneca charged them with having produced the extravagance and lewdness and debauchery of the age. The early Christian Fathers thundered against them as works of heathenism and schools of debauchery. The same course of degeneracy marks the dramatic representations among the Hindoos. In China and Japan, women are not allowed to perform. The European stage grew out of the "Mysteries of the Middle Ages," a sort of sacred drama, and the

"Moralities," which had to be suppressed, for "Faith, Hope and Charity" would stagger across the stage in a state of intoxication. Addison and Steele condemn the loose diversions of the English stage. The stage ministered to the profligacy of the times of Charles II. of England, and of Louis XIV. of France. "Before the 'reign of terror,' five or six theatres sufficed for Paris, but when the nation rejected God and set up a prostitute as the 'Goddess of Reason,'" says Burke, the historian, "twenty-eight theatres were in full blast, and crowded every night. Amid the gaunt and haggard forms of famine, the yells of murder and cries of despair, the song, the dance, the mimic scene and buffoon laughter went on as in the gay hours of festive peace. At night the brutal outlaws crowded the theatres to witness representations of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and in the morning turned to the congenial work of butchering babes and innocent girls."

The American Congress, just after the Declaration of Independence, took action against the

theatre as productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners.

Do you think an institution which has so disgraceful a history should be patronized by those who have any regard for the decencies of home and the purities of religion? "Oh," but you say, "there has been a great reform since then." Reform! Where? It is well known that in every city of Christendom, where the standard of morals is lowest, theatres thrive best. To-day the director of the City Prison in Paris says, "When a new play of vicious character is put upon the boards, I very soon find it out by the number of young fellows who come into my custody." A fine record that for a school of morals! The Lord Chamberlain of England is now doing his best to abate the evils of theatrical exhibitions that are a disgrace to an enlightened country. What of the American theatre? Let actors and managers themselves speak. Mr. Palmer, the Madison Square manager, says, "The bulk of the performances on

the stage are degrading and pernicious. If the unwholesome craze goes on the imagination can hardly paint a picture vivid enough to do justice to the stage of ten years hence."

Mr. Bandmann, an actor of thirty years, says, "I unhesitatingly state that the taste of the present theatre-going people of America, as a body, is of a coarse and vulgar nature." In Chicago, this institution openly tramples on the Sabbath, with scoff and revelry, and caricatures everything holy. What of our own city? About a year ago the mayor was called upon to suppress the indecent performances that disgraced the Grand Opera House for nearly a week. A short time ago Rhea gave a play that was a direct assault upon virtue, and that crimsoned the cheek of every virtuous woman in the crowded audience. One of our dailies complained bitterly of the outrage, and ventured the assertion that hundreds would not again be found in the only place where such an insult could be offered, viz.:—the theatre. Yet when the actress returns she is petted and

praised as before. People soon accustom themselves to these things; they must not be too punctilious. The stage is the disseminator of evil. It is "the devil's chapel—the stronghold of the god of this world."

The theatre is an institution—not an individual. You have to take it as a whole. Why, one-half of its show-bills are an offence against decency. Shall Christians give countenance to an institution whose characteristic features are an offence against purity, against religion, and against God.

II. *Look at the matter of the theatre, and we say "No" to the question, "Shall we or shall we not attend it?"* Its plays are largely trashy and corrupting. Here we have little to say against the legitimate drama, though even Shakespeare wrote things that are not the purest. There are plays like "Hazel Kirke," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Rip Van Winkle," "Rosedale," "The Two Orphans," "Edgewood Folks," Bulwer's "Richelieu," "The Lady of Lyons," and others, that have nothing in them

immoral or indelicate. But what about "Patience," "The Pirates of Penzance," "Led Astray," "Camille," "The French Spy," "Mazeppa," "Frou-Frou," "Adrienne Lacouvrier," and the fetid and unwholesome rubbish that makes up three-quarters of the exhibitions of our first-class theatres.

Dr. Binney declares that there is not an adequate number of perfectly unexceptionable plays in the world to constitute a sufficient stock for a single company of virtuous actors. The clean plays are like Gratiano's "two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff." That whole class called seventh commandment plays are demoralizing in the highest degree, and just as "Pendragon" hinges on adultery, so these plays turn on criminal passions, and as the result murder, abduction, and marital infidelity abound in society. Adultery is bad enough when arraigned for punishment before our criminal courts, but it is a thousand times worse in its demoralizing effects when set forth on the stage. This is why theatrical representa-

tions are in their very nature degrading. The stage can never be made a mirror of Christian sentiments and morals. It is the active passions that must be represented in plays, and so Dumas replied to one of his critics, "You would not take your daughter to see my play. You are right, but let me say once for all, you must not take your daughter to the theatre at all. It is not merely the work that is immoral, it is the playing. The theatre being the picture and the satire of social manners, it must be immoral, the passions and social manners being themselves immoral."

Do you say, "We have gone to the theatre and have heard nothing but good?" We have acknowledged that there is occasional good. But have you attended regularly the theatre and never had occasion to blush? never had an unholy desire stimulated? What are its effects upon the regular attendant? Here is a business man in want of a confidential clerk. He goes to the theatre and sees a young man deeply absorbed in the play. This young man makes applica-

tion for the situation. The business man says, "I saw you last night at the theatre; are you often there?" "O yes, every night," he answers. Is that business man likely to take that regular theatre-goer as his confidential clerk? Anybody that is honest will admit that the vast majority of plays are bad and unwholesome; and taking it for granted that once a week a play is put upon the boards that no one can take exception to, yet does not every instinct of our better nature, and the voices of reason and Scripture, say, It is wrong to cross the threshold of an institution three-fourths of whose influence is pernicious and poisonous?

III. *Look at the manners of the stage, and we say "No" to the question, "Shall we or shall we not attend the theatre?"* The teaching is not only corrupting in its matter, but also in its manner. Its work is to gild vice and fling contempt upon the religious faith and morality of every age. In our day it is corrupting public manners and public morals through the eye. Its

very advertisements are an appeal to lust. It makes our young people at home with almost absolute nudity. What is the idea of exhibiting young women, not only improperly but *indecently* clothed—so clad that to the eye of the audience they seem, and are meant to seem, almost naked? Does any one need to be told why? Simply to breed lust and furnish candidates for the brothel. I would like to ask some of you admirers of scantily dressed fairies in pink tights, how would you like that form to be your daughter, your sister, your wife? Yet she is somebody's child, somebody's sister. Think of professing Christians—men and women professing godliness—redeemed by Christ, and cultivating purity, *patronizing* and *sanctioning* such things.

IV. *Again, look at the company that gathers in and about the theatre, and we say "No" to the question, "Shall we or shall we not attend the theatre?"* The average character of theatrical attendance shows that Christians should not be found there. I suppose that in almost every

theatre you will find the good and virtuous. Some go to see for themselves, some go as critics, some admire tragedy, and some go to enjoy the farce. Some go to see a famous actor or beautiful actress. They delight in the splendid acting, and they sit through the ballet and other indecencies. But we speak now of the regular theatre-goers. Thieves go there, and gamblers go there; jockeys and spendthrifts go there; dissipated men and fallen women. You will find such characters occasionally at a church, a concert, or lecture, but you will always find them at the theatre. You will find some of the most respectable classes there, but if you want to see the very cream of codfish aristocracy go to the theatre. There they are—men with swallow-tail coats and white cravats, pompously showing their watch-guards and shirt-fronts; women with dingy gloves, red and white opera cloaks, tawdry head-gear, and showy jewellery.

You will generally find some of the well-to-do classes there, but if you want to see the very froth of the middle classes, go to the theatre.

There they are—fancy men, clerks that spend a good deal more than their wages, shiftless tradesmen, and home-neglecting women.

You will generally find some of the decent poor there, but if you want to see the very scum of vicious poverty, go to the theatre and you find them—rowdy and riff-raff, bully, black-guard, billiard-sharper and gambler, bar-keeper and loafer, wife-beater, gin-guzzler, lecherous men, and fallen women.

The patrons of the grog-shops are the patrons of the theatre always. The patrons of the brothel are the patrons of the theatre always. The patrons of the gambling-hells are the patrons of the theatre always.

Is it not strange that the very worst classes of society are its most frequent attendants? Yet it is a school of morals! What kind of school is that which draws together the abandoned, the swindler, the forger, the swearer, the scoffer, the courtesan and the paramour? When you see turkey-buzzards and carrion birds congregating, be sure there is a carcass near; and

where you see such characters swarming give that place a wide berth.

The play a "School of Morals!" Then how is it that the teachers so seldom learn their own lessons? You know the historic reputation of actors and actresses. But you give the stock answer—"Ministers are often guilty of immorality." Yes, and they are at once expelled from the pulpit. But fancy Irving and Terry being tried on the well-known rumors of improper relations and silenced by the play-going public. Let a scandal affect a public school-teacher, and he or she is at once dismissed. How is it that actors and actresses can set at defiance all the laws of morality, can live in scandalous and admitted wickedness, and lose not one iota of popularity? Understand me, there are virtuous actors, no doubt, but what I am making out is that immorality is no disqualification for the profession of an actor.

A "School of Morals!" Rather costly teaching. When Bernhardt was in Montreal, one night's receipts were enough to have run half-a-

dozen of our smaller churches for a whole year. Ellsler, the famous dancer, received \$1,000 a night, and after a short engagement in one city received a present of \$57,000. Another received \$60,000 for fifteen weeks dancing in this school of morals. The receipts of one of the Chicago theatres often rise as high as \$7,000 for a single performance. Pretty costly teaching of morality that! The patronage of the theatre involves a foolish expenditure of money, and so leads to one or other of these results—poverty and crime, or debt and dishonesty.

In conclusion you will observe that I have made no denunciations. I have applied the touchstone of our text and tested the theatre in the light of history, of reason, of Christian morals, and of common sense. I judge that no true Christian will sustain any amusement whose spirit and tendency are contrary to the spirit and tendency of pure religion. When Church members—really converted, faithful in Christian work, punctual in class and prayer meetings, laboring in revivals, and giving evi-

dence of high religious experience—assure me that theatre-going does not tend to destroy their spirituality, but helps them to live nearer to Christ and heaven, then I shall say, let the Church give up its ancient and constant opposition, and let preacher and actor be folded, like David and Jonathan, in loving embrace. Meanwhile, we ask every spiritually-minded person to help stay the flood-gates of sinful amusements that are sweeping over our homes, and paralyzing the Church's power and usefulness. If ever the Lord Jesus Christ needed witnesses—holy, consistent, self-denying, cross-bearing disciples—it is now. You have taken upon you baptismal vows to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of this world, and the carnal desires of the flesh. You cannot find the world, the flesh, and the devil more fully incarnated and embodied than in a low-class theatre. Granted, that you never attend any but the best, and granted that it has no dissipating or demoralizing effect upon your life; that it does not interfere with your love

and zeal for Christ, your deep and holy communion with God, your family prayer and earnest work for the Master; yet if others, by your occasional going, are led to patronize an institution whose general effect is deleterious and hurtful, I ask you, "Will you not, for Christ's sake, deny yourself, and for the sake of weak and easily tempted men, avoid the very appearance of evil?" The world expects better things of us than it does of its own.

A Church member and his wife in a strange city went to hear, on a Saturday evening, a famous actor. They overheard another say, sneeringly, to his companion, "A pretty place, I should think, for Church members to be on Saturday night." He did not refer to them, for he pointed to another part of the house, but it was no less a home-thrust. They could not stay it out, but left filled with the humiliating sense of how easy a thing it is for one of Christ's little ones to become a stumbling block, and an occasion of offence.

A young man was dying, and sent for an old

Sunday-school teacher to see him, and then charged him with the ruin of his soul. He said that some time ago he had seen him enter a theatre and had followed his example, saying to himself, that if a Christian could do this he could. It was the first step on his downward road, and now amid the billows and breakers of death, he charged upon this evil example the ruin of his soul.

I could enjoy a Shakesperean play as well as anyone, but, rather than that I should give countenance to such an institution as the theatre; rather than that my influence and example should lead to the going astray of any young person; I say, rather let a mill-stone be hanged about my neck and let me be drowned in the depths of the sea. Moreover, I hold that no man or woman that has anything of the spirit of Christ can take any other attitude.

O fathers and mothers! give your lives to better, nobler, and purer things than theatre-going. I tell you the theatre has ever been the sworn and bitter foe of the home circle. Exclaimed a

mother in anguish, "O that theatre, that theatre; my son was a good, kind boy, till that proved his ruin." While the Tremont Theatre, Boston, was being turned into the Temple, an old man tottered in and was overcome with emotion. A workman came to support him, and the old man said to him, in great bitterness of soul, "Oh, I was thinking of my two sons that were both ruined here." Will you sanction anything that will curse and despoil your home? Did you ever hear of a father or mother saying at the last, "I am sorry I never attended a theatre." Never! An Alpine guide, a great mountain climber, as he was struggling along a mountain side once heard his son call out, "Father, keep in the safe path, for your little boy is following you, your little boy is following you." Will you lead your boy to ruin? Keep in the safe path, for he is following you.

Young lady, let me warn you against the theatre. It will give you a taste for what is frivolous, and worldly, and anti-Christian, and a distaste for what is pure, spiritual and Christ-

like. Many go there to stifle their convictions and kill out their spiritual feelings. Get a taste for it and you will go if the young man who escorts you has to steal money to pay his theatre bills. And I tell you this: you will be made no better by watching these plays of criminal passions by females of easy virtue. Can you take pitch into your hands and not be defiled? Can you take fire into your bosom and not be burned?

Young man, go to the lazar-house of the plague, go to the small-pox hospital, but go not to these carnivals of lust. Do you say, "I am a regular theatre-goer, and I never saw or heard anything objectionable?" Your moral sensibilities must have been sadly blunted. You see nothing objectionable in "Camille" and "Adrienne Lacouvrier," recently played in our city by Modjeska? One play the glorification of a harlot; the other a direct assault upon society, for it is sustained throughout by two adulterous *liaisons*. You see nothing bad in these! Then so much the worse for public virtue and decency; as if vice and vile-

ness were not public enough without being flung, with sound of music and scenic attractions and splendor of genius, into the face of thousands.

Do you say, "I take the good and bad together because of the good?" That is, you buy an obscene book because of a little moral teaching scattered here and there through its pages, so that the good is made to serve the bad.

Young man, you cannot afford to have moral assassins stab your purity, and if you want to keep pure, then be willing to lose your right hand rather than let it open the door to the theatre.

Do you say that you want some amusement for your overworked brain, and that by carefully inquiring into the character of the plays that are offered, you can avoid the bad? Well, now, wouldn't you rather choose a road that was clean all the way than go picking your steps through a road of filth and dirt? I would. And as to recreation, you do need so much more than you get! The time hangs so heavily on your hands! Why

not say frankly that you like the theatre? The footlights, the shifting scenes, the music, the glitter of gaudy forms, the magic curtain—all come as an enchanting dream to youth. Your thoughts become feverish; existence becomes unreal; you hate the sober, the practical, the useful, and become enamored of the extravagant, the sensual and the impure. "There is more hope of a fool than of such a one."

Play-going is dissipation. It does not renew or refresh, but stirs the blood, sets the passions into wild tumult, rouses the brain into feverish activity, and produces a mental intoxication. God forbid that I should abridge the innocent pleasures and enjoyments of any one; but "Good Lord deliver us" from feeding on the "husks that swine do eat." My friends, you and I are hastening to the bar of God. Behold! at the door are death, judgment and eternity. How will you meet them? Will tragedy meet death, comedy meet judgment, and farce meet eternity? I charge you, by the hopes of happiness and heaven; by the memory of a mother's love and a

mother's prayers; by the mercies of God; by the
 constraining love of Christ; by the power of the
 Holy Ghost, cease to do evil, learn to do well.
 "For the axe is already laid unto the root of the
 trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not
 forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the
 fire."





SERMON V.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness."—*Prov. iii. 17.*

WE have before us the attractive charms of religion which the inspired penman designates by the majestic title of wisdom. And how appropriate is this name chosen by the Spirit of Inspiration. Wisdom—which consists not merely in intellectual knowledge or worldly prudence, but in the performance of *duty* in shunning the paths of sin and walking in the way of righteousness. Wisdom—for only "the fool hath said in his heart there

is no God," and only folly declared, I desire not the knowledge of His ways. And this pleasantness is not set forth as one of the charms but as *the* charm, the *peculiar excellence*, of piety. "*Her* ways are ways of pleasantness." Happiness or pleasure is the great end of existence. Every heart is panting to gain it, every foot is pressing to reach it, every eye is searching to behold it, every hand is open to grasp and possess it. Here, then, is the strongest motive to a religious life: it secures us that which is, so far as we ourselves are concerned, the aim of every action, the very end of being. That pleasures, real substantial pleasures, are to be enjoyed in this world we cannot doubt. Our Creator has endowed us with faculties whose exercise affords pleasure. He has placed us amid objects adapted to these faculties, and we do grievous injustice to the bountiful Donor of our mercies to suppose that these powers were never made to be employed, these desires never given to be gratified, these objects never placed here to be enjoyed. Yet, sad to say, we seek not the

best pleasures but the *worst* ; we go not to the pure fountains, but to the corrupted stream ; we follow not the dictates of reason and the way-marks of heaven, but the guidance of passion and the objects of sense. We prefer the pleasures of *sin* to those of obedience. But pleasure worth the name is to be found alone in virtue's path. O that the world would hear and heed this truth—that true piety is the only dispenser of real unmixed delights. The prevailing notion is that she is an enemy to enjoyment, and interferes with our rational pleasures. There is nothing so pernicious to virtue as this foolish idea, that whatever joys and rewards she may point to in the future she has but few pleasures for her votaries and friends in the present life. Would that we could impress this truth upon you, that there is indeed no rigorousness and austerity, but real solid lasting enjoyment in the service of the Lord. Religion comes not to banish gladness from the heart, but to heighten its joys. She comes not to destroy our appetites and passions, but to exalt and restrain them ; for,

like the physical elements, they are beneficent in their offices when watched and kept under ; but unguarded and ungoverned, they are ruthless and destructive as the fire and the storm. She comes not to take away our affections, but to elevate and purify them by fixing them upon higher and worthier objects. She comes not to strip the heart of its humanness, but to enlarge it ; to root out all selfishness and give it a kindlier and more ardent glow. She comes not to destroy one element of our being, but to give health and soundness to the whole man ; to renew our nature—to take away the carnal and impure, and give a relish for the pure, the spiritual, the divine, the immortal. In further pursuing the subject under consideration, we observe :

I. *Religion has pleasures.*

II. *These pleasures are of the highest kind.*

III. *They are the most enduring.*

I. *Religion has pleasures.* (1) The Word of God declares it. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness." "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." "Her servants take pleasure in her." These are not the unholy pleasures of the world, for "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Nor yet the pleasures of sin, but pleasures of her own, and they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction who employ such passages as those we have quoted as a license to join in the follies and vices of the world, to indulge in sinful excesses or trifling vanities unworthy the man and unbecoming to saints.

(2) And not only the Word but the people of God declare that religion has pleasures. David cries, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." The early Christians rejoiced with a joy that was "unspeakable and full of glory." Have you not met with those who possessed a depth and richness of experience that surprised you, and did you not feel how high and holy was the spring of their joy? There is not a Christian in the world who will not acknowledge

that he is happier with religion than without it, that he is happy in proportion as he is holy. You may say, perhaps, they are mistaken. Well, does not a man know whether he is happy or not, whether he enjoys himself or not? You give him credit for sincerity, and if he is not allowed to go to his own experience where else can he go?

(3) Nor is it a valid objection to religion that the sinful man does not enjoy these pleasures. A brute could not enjoy the pleasures of an angel, any more than an angel could enjoy the pleasures of a brute. There must be adaptation of the nature and faculties to the objects. Light must be adapted to the eye before there is sight, food to the appetite for taste; so there must be a suitableness between our own dispositions and the objects of religion. The drunkard enjoys a *sprees*, and sees no pleasure in temperance, but there is pleasure; the epicure sees no pleasure in moderation, but there is pleasure. So there are pleasures in religion which the carnal mind cannot enjoy.

Would you talk of dainty meats and delicious fruits to the man without taste? Would you talk of music to the man without hearing? Why, the very choir of heaven might flood the air with ravishing harmonies, but the thunders' crash and the angels' song would be alike unheeded. Would you talk of beauty to the man without sight? Why, over him might stretch the blue sky, with its midnight pomp or noon-day splendor, and under him the green earth, fragrant with deep grass and tinted flowers, around him flit forms of loveliness, and he never dream of the world of beauty amid which he is placed. So would you talk of religion's pleasures to the man of uncrucified flesh and unsanctified habits! Her pleasures are of a spiritual nature and can be enjoyed only by those "who are born of the Spirit," and have a relish for spiritual things. Remember, she starts with a new *heart*, and her pleasures are the enjoyments of that new nature. It is a "rejoicing in the Lord." Not that there is no relish for the innocent gratifications of this life.

The Christian does enjoy the blessings of health, plenty, friendship, society, and home; he can play with his children and enjoy life in earnest. He can drink the exhilarating cup of earthly joys, not drugged and embittered by sin, but sweetened and purified by grace. He shares all the happiness that this life can offer, without drawing from ignoble sources; without stealing joys from hell; while over and above this he has a nature which rises heavenward, and tastes pleasures unknown to the world and above the reach of the world. As a lighted candle when plunged into a jar of oxygen will blaze up more brightly, so the commonest joys are transformed and ennobled by religion, and the very water from earth's cisterns is changed into the wine of the Kingdom—"wine, new and strong," making glad the heart of man. Religion, then, has pleasures.

II. *The pleasures of religion are of the highest kind.* Our nature consists of matter and spirit, mind and body mysteriously joined. Each of these two natures possesses peculiar properties;

while between them subsists a mutual relationship and constant interchange. Both are susceptible of pleasure. The appetites, which take their rise from the body, minister to the pleasures of our lower nature. The remainder of our active principles spring from our spiritual nature, and claim affinity to the skies. Now, the pleasures of the mind are as infinitely superior to those of the body as mind is superior to matter; for while the one is chained to earth, to low and sensuous objects, and confined to kind, the other is capable of drinking in the endless, immeasurable joy of the universe. Indeed, as the body is but the vehicle of the soul, and is subservient to the soul, so also should be its pleasures; and he who does not allow his lower nature to be governed by his higher, degrades his manhood. These lower principles were made only for occasional indulgence, and always under the guidance of reason and within the limits of the Divine law; but when reason and revelation are spurned and we yield ourselves up to their clamorous demands, we

wallow in embrutedness and sacrifice the most permanent enjoyments for the meanest gratifications. Now, we do not say that there is no pleasure in gratifying these lower propensities. There is pleasure. The dog trailing at his master's feet, the horse basking in the sunbeams, the seal sleeping on his island-rock, the bird nestled in the branches, have pleasures, but they are of the lowest kind. The pleasures of sin are sensual pleasures. They are emphatically of the earth, earthy, and the sinner's only care is to heap about him the means and appliances of sensuous gratification. The Christian's pleasures are chiefly spiritual, but he has higher bodily pleasures than even the sinner. While he does not place his happiness in the pleasures of sense, he has them, nevertheless, with their proper restraints. He takes his appetites as the badges of weakness, needful to a certain extent, and in infancy the sole objects of attention ; but he feels that while it is proper for the child to suck its toys and be absorbed in them, the man should outgrow the playthings of childhood, and

not be dependent upon them for his happiness. The carnal pleasure-taker lives for these alone, and in this respect he is a baby. But worse than this, he is a transgressor also, and seeks to enlarge the sphere of enjoyment beyond the limits prescribed by nature. But by a law of our being, the sensibility of pleasure decays in proportion as the cravings of appetite increase. These cravings are increased by indulgence so that the greater the indulgence the less the pleasure from indulgence. Who does not know this law ? Moreover, the man who yields to his passions yields to tyrants whose strength he knows not, and is driven by them as by a whip of scorpions into abysses of misery and guilt. His ungoverned appetite will be satisfied though health, honor and the dearest ties of life lie in the way. Have you not seen it ? A man under the almost irresistible influence of intemperance or sensuality will gratify his passions though their fires consume his very being, and though all he holds dear on earth—honor, character, friends, wife, children, home—go down

on their knees before him to forbear. These are the pleasures of sin. There is true pleasure alone in the proper indulgence of these lower principles, and such pleasures belong to virtue and obedience.

But we go to the higher part of our nature—the mind, boundless in its graspings—the soul, immortal in its being. Sinful pleasures cater to the lower nature; the pleasures of religion are the pleasures of our higher being. Take the commonest laboring man; sit down and talk with him about his business, and if you are better informed seek to develop out of something with which he is familiar some higher thought or principle, and what a chord you strike within, what new joy you give him!

Your little boy goes to school, and drudges away, but does not know how to study. By and by he makes a plunge at some problem and conquers, some irksome lesson, and triumphs. He has got the key to knowledge, the way to study has dawned upon him. Why, he feels larger at once; he walks with higher head; he

says, "I can learn now, I can learn anything." Before, he used to fail, he was down among the dunces ; he always needed the next boy to help him. Now he goes up in his class ; he scorns to be told ; he wants his teacher to ask him questions ; he has learned the pleasure of thinking ; he can grapple with ideas and make them his own. These are like the pleasures of religion, for they are pleasures of the immortal being, pleasures of the soul and of thought. The mind not only receives its impress but its very cast and character from the objects with which it is conversant. How noble, then, how sublime the pleasures of that mind filled and pervaded with the magnificent revelations of the Gospel—the wonders of the Godhead, the mysteries of redemption and the glories of futurity. Is not the proud eagle the king of birds as he lifts himself from his rocky eyry and far above the storm-cloud rises that he may bask in a flood of light and renew his youth in the bright beams of the unclouded sun ? And is not he the king of men who rises from low and grovelling things to the

glories of the invisible world, whose soul follows from link to link the chain of truth which binds the universe to the Eternal Throne, nor stops until it folds its wing and veils its face in the unapproachable light and presence of the God Most High. And O! the pleasures of such a soul in communion with the Divine. Are there delights in the creature? Then, what ravishing joys must be found in the Creator, who is the Well of Life, the Fountain and source of all pleasure! What a "fulness of joy" to be found in Him who is the Life and Light of men, and what waves of glory must break o'er the soul bathing in the sea of His all-sufficiency and rejoicing in his over-flowing love! It is his also to contemplate God in all His *works*. In the sun, emerging from the gilded gates of morning, he sees the burnings of Deity; in the stars of night the outshining of His glory; in the music of the zephyr and the melody of the song-bird the whispers of His praises; in the surging of the sea-wave and the echoing clash of clouds, the thunders of His voice.

The pleasures of the world are like its honors,
all fleeting, and it is all summed up in the
words of Cardinal Wolsey, in Henry VIII. :

"So, farewell to the little good you bear me.
Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness !
This is the state of man : to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope ; to-morrow blossoms
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him :
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost ;
And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory ;
But far beyond my depth, my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must forever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye :
I feel my heart new opened. O how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors !
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have :
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again."

But religion opens up a fountain of sweet
water in a briny and turbid sea. The pleasures
of the world will have bitterness in the mouth

—however sweet at first; the pleasures of religion are lasting and perpetual: they are heavenly fountains, Divine wells in the desert of life.

Religion thus transfigures common things and makes the whole earth full of His glory:—

“Earth’s crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush alive with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.”

III. *These pleasures are the most enduring.*
The pleasures of sin are only for a season, they are limited in duration. The pleasures of religion belong to the other nature and are therefore lasting as that nature. They are not the pleasures of sense, but of the soul—the immortal being. The joys of earth are very fleeting:

“As well seek mellow grapes beneath the icy pole,
Or blooming roses on the cheek of death,”

as lasting pleasure in earth’s changing things.

I think it was Xerxes who offered a large reward to the man who would invent a new pleasure. Lord Chesterfield said, “I have run the silly round of pleasures, and have done

with them all. Those who have seen only the outsides always overvalue them, but I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move the gaudy machine."

Take the *recreations* of life, and religion offers more rational and better amusements than the world. True, we are in the midst of a strong reactionary current, and the church takes larger liberties than of yore with certain forms of amusement that belong exclusively to the world. Many have made up their minds to have certain liberties, as they call them, no matter how improper or unspiritual. They want to be and do like the fashionable world around them. Others yield to the current with hesitation and discomfort, while a few are alarmed at these looser views of practices, as full of inconsistency, a hindrance to piety, and a stumbling block in the way of winning the world to Christ. In the midst of these questionings there are great general principles, at once scriptural and rational, that govern both work and play. The Church exists for what purpose? Why, to show

the life of Christ among men at once strong and beautiful, and divinely pervaded, by "whatsoever is true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report." Amusements have their place, but instead of fighting the devil with his own weapons, and throwing Christian presence into the midst of worldly amusements, some of which are impure and cannot be purified, it is for the Church to set a fashion of its own, true to nature and the gospel ; using the world as not abusing it, and doing all things to the glory of God. Religion applies its tests to amusements just as it does to human life and conduct everywhere. To be lawful they must recreate and increase our capacity for work. There must be discretion and a due regard to expense. Above all things, they must be free from the taint of impurity. Every good man will avoid and condemn any amusement which, though harmless in itself, has become connected with immorality. As a matter of pure ethics, the Christian has a right to do what any man may rightly do, or go anywhere that anyone may rightly go ; but he stands

also in relation to others. "No man liveth to himself." Having liberty to do all things that are lawful, there comes in, also, the higher law of regarding the weakness and frailty of others. See what religion offers to childhood, the age of romp and play. It is the pleasure-time of life, and the cry of the children is for a few simple and harmless materials, and they will manufacture their own amusements with success and satisfaction. But these fashionable children's parties! Is there anything more monstrous or absurd? To set them aping our barbarous fashions by decking them out in kids and finery; going to them at a time when they ought to be going to bed; choosing their partners and stuffing their little stomachs at an outlandish hour. The whole thing is preposterous! To banish the simple and natural, and put children upon the stilts of fashion to ape the manners of the full grown. Why, common sense, let alone religion, should teach us to wash our hands of such stupidity.

As to youth. See what religion offers at a

time when play begins to sink into the background and work to come to the front. There are the athletic sports, the nerve-bracing and becoming out-door plays, the well-regulated concert and profitable lecture-room, the harmless fireside games, diverting and entertaining, which throw a charm around the evenings at home, and which are free from late hours and feverish excitements. Religion says, "Go here, go there; enjoy this, and that, in the highest liberty and with the greatest measure of blessedness, but when any amusement is carried over from recreation into dissipation, or linked with anything immoral, it is time for anyone who means to respect the laws of God, whether in nature or His Word, to quit, and not only to quit, but take his family out of it, and, with his friends, seek a more wholesome diversion.

But this brings us to the question, "What shall we do for amusements?" The cry is, "Give us a substitute for those things which you have taken away. If we are not to drink, or play cards, or dance, or attend the theatre, what are

we to do?" As if there were not sweet, and mirthful, and healthful recreations enough without these objectionable ones! As if the world would die of *ennui* if these things were banished from the earth forever! I have discussed this question entirely from the Christian attitude. One thing is certain, if the Church had set her own fashions as to recreations instead of taking them as they are and conforming to the world, we would not find so many of her members in the wild chase after the world's amusements. Millions upon millions of Christians with brains and culture enough to be able to say what is proper in the way of amusements, for childhood, youth, and adult life; what is in accord with right reason and faith, right taste and morals, without obeying the high behests of fashionable life in the most godless centres of Christendom!

We have objected to card playing because cards are the tools of gamblers, and because the play leads to immoral uses of these games in immoral places. But are there not games of

Authors, and fireside games by the dozen, that will do good like a medicine, and give refined enjoyment without any demoralizing taint ? We have objected to the dance, as running to dissipation and exposures dangerous to health, and, in some forms, revolting to true delicacy and propriety. Sam Jones calls these round dances nothing but "hugging set to music," and an army officer, on beholding for the first time a round dance, said, "If I should see a man offering to dance with my wife in that way I would horse-whip him." But many cannot enjoy amusements without a dash of wickedness in them, like the French woman who, holding a glass of water in her jewelled hand, exclaimed, "Oh, if it were only wicked to sip that water how sweet it would taste." So it is the spice of sin that sweetens the dance ; but if it were banished forever from our parlors, must we sit down and fold our hands demurely as if there were nothing left. It is only a physical exercise between the sexes. Have we not plenty of physical sports ? There is croquet, and ball,

and lawn tennis, and sailing, rowing, skating, and what not.

What of roller skating rinks? I believe they are often vicious and unhealthy. Have you felt no evil influence of their promiscuous associations and surroundings? Well, persons have lived in districts visited by yellow fever and the plague, and have survived; but I prefer living away from those districts. What of our winter sports?—all good, except where they are dangerous to life and limb. We have had a number of serious injuries this season from tobogganing, but we will need some first-class funerals to dampen the craze over this dangerous amusement.

We have ruled out the theatre, but in its place we have tableaux, lectures, and readings, from men and women as talented as often appear on the stage. A friend of mine, of thought and culture, said, "I admit your objections against the theatre, but why can we not *reform* it?" Because that is impossible. The effort has been tried and failed. Garrick tried

it, but did not succeed. A committee of the British Parliament, after full investigation, reported that the only way to reform the theatre was to burn it down. Three of the principal theatres of Philadelphia started with reform and the standard drama, but soon degenerated. In Boston the same—the managers resolved to have no bar-room near, and to keep out the abandoned, but soon had to confess that under such regulations the theatre would not get an audience if the admission were free.

In New York Wallack's and Booth's started as reform institutions: so also the Park, and Broadway and Niblo's. You know the result. Niblo's introduced the Black Crook, and tried to introduce the Passion Play, to represent on the boards of a theatre the sufferings and death of the world's Redeemer. The stage cannot be reformed, because it is just what its name imports—acting a part. Men and women who act any character soon have no character of their own. You have heard of the crazy clergyman, who, to hasten the world's conversion, hit upon

the happy expedient of reforming the devil. His plan was to baptize him, take him into the Church, make him subject to its discipline, and this, he thought, would leave the world open to the Gospel. The theatre is attractive to the majority of its attendants on account of its evils. Get rid of these, and the crowd would run rival institutions under the old monopoly. There never was a time when the theatre had so much patronage from professing Christians as now, yet the theatre is getting worse and worse, as we all know; the grade is downward, and it gets deeper and deeper into the mire. It is as much as the Church can do to attend to its own institutions, and the world does not want it reformed. The only way to reform an evil is to destroy it. The theatre is an old, lumbering mode of propagating instruction that is entirely superseded by the press and the spread of books. What do we need of amusements in this way, when we have all the lighter forms of literature, fiction and poetry for our leisure hours?

Then, in the way of musical entertainment,

there are the concerts of the Philharmonic and other great societies.

What of the opera? Is it clean enough for Christian endorsement? The opera is a musical theatre. The play is sung and acted, instead of being spoken and acted.

(1) It also, like the theatre, has a bad history. It was organized about the year 1600 A.D., when Christianity was utterly perverted, and was designed to furnish amusement to people notoriously lacking in piety and decent morals. It was and still is designed to pander to the vices and passions of immoral society. Italian and French in manners and tastes, it is also Italian and French in morals.

(2) Look at its moral tone. The pure and chaste opera is the exception. Of the light and comic, it may be said, if it is not evil it is always effeminate, for as Sir Walter Scott observes, "It has become proverbial to express nonsense and insanity." Boil down "Pinafore" and "Mikado" and what have you got? Mendelssohn said, "I have no music for such things; I consider it

ignoble." But what shall we say of the immoral opera? Some of the sweetest strains of music ever sung are in "Norma." But how the gift of song has been debased. Norma has been seduced, and she discovers her paramour in an attempt to seduce her friend. Can Christians patronize an institution which thus perfumes sin with roses, garlands it with flowers, covers it with silk and crimson, and gives it a tone of ravishing melody. "Don Giovanni" is simply "Don Juan"—a poem which no man or woman could read aloud to a company of friends gathered in the parlor—set to sensuous music; "La Traviata" is "Camille" set to music; "Lucretia Borgia" is adultery associated with incest; "Faust" is the most specious apology for seduction. These are among the most popular of operas. Can Christians go to see represented in an opera what would send to perdition a soul for doing—immoralities of the deepest dye, perfumed with roses, crowned with garlands, wreathed in fascinating smiles, made charming to the ear and bewitching to the eye. If it be said that the

vicious sentiments are in foreign language, we grant it. The English language is not foul enough for such loathsome spawn ; but the *libretto* makes known the drift of the plot, the singers understand it all, and by the sorcery of music, by attitude, and gesture, and intonation, interpret the unchaste and lawless love.

(3) There is one more view of the opera. There are the same indecencies of apparel that characterize the theatre ; and the immoral dancing—the *ballet*—is as much a part of the opera as the music. The crime of undress must condemn the opera ; the question concerning the chorus being not how well they can sing but how little they will wear. Its influence is here all the more demoralizing because the divine art of music is lent to make sin still more enticing, and easy-going Christians are caught in the snare. The great apology for opera-going is to hear the best music, but I will take even that plea away. We have the whole realm of Church music—the grandest in the world—and the immortal oratorios, all open to

us. Then there is the wealth of instrumental music—organ, piano, harp, violin—orchestral music, martial music, orchestras, bands, pianists, organists, cornetists, violinists—the eminent masters of every instrument. Then there is the great realm of ballad and song literature. The vocal concerts, too, are ours, with the best singers, the leading artists in the world. Jenny Lind, and Emma Abbott, and other *prima donnas*, have refused to sing in immoral operas, but they, with Nillson and others, are sure to appear in popular concerts. The opera scarcely constitutes one-fiftieth part of the music of the world. Here, then, is forty-nine fiftieths of all the music that has ever been composed which a Christian may enjoy with propriety. What do you want of the only portion that is tainted and immoral? Do you say, "O, to hear the choice music there too." Well, we will take that plea and answer it. The opera consists of much ordinary music, interspersed with airs and recitatives that are simply grand, and these gems are the glory of the opera. But these

ravishing pearls of song are all culled out and published in sheet music, so that we can hear all these rendered by the great singers of the world in popular concerts, without going to the opera. Now, then, with forty-nine fiftieths of all music open to us, and the gems of all the operas culled out of the remaining fiftieth, there is nothing left but the dregs,—nothing more for you to crave save the immoral plot, the corrupting sentiments, the indecent dancing, and other accessories. Therefore, never again say that you have to go to the opera to hear the best music. Only an evil heart loves an evil place; and a deceived heart is willing for the sake of a passing enjoyment to call evil good, and good evil.

We have thus gone over the entire ground of amusements. The Church, which cannot stand aloof from family, political, or social life, does not reject all amusements, but only on immoral amusements. We have shown the reasons why the Church objects to the theatre, the opera, the dance, and the card-table. The

most devout and pious Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists are one with us in condemnation of these things. You cannot find a spiritual worker, or a soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness, indulging in these amusements. It is not a very popular thing to be an earnest, zealous Christian. If you want to be popular in society you must not be much of a Christian. So, if you want to be a popular preacher you must not speak out against these things which the world and worldly-minded Church-members love so well. But one need not go far to find out by experience that the self-denying, earnest, consistent, consecrated people of the Church are not the dancing, card-playing, theatre-going members. It is time that we drew the line between innocent amusements and unhallowed ones. We have tried to speak out the truth, and have made some angry and annoyed many. A few may be thankful for the faithful warning; but let one and all remember that Christianity is no enemy to enjoyment, simply because

she forbids certain pleasures, and says of them, "No, no; indulge at your peril."

She endorses all pleasures that are pure and wholesome, healthful and invigorating, and she offers also pleasures of her own which the world cannot give. Behold her, heaven-robed and fair. She walks a queen—"grace in all her steps, heaven in all her eye, in every gesture dignity and love." Her pathway is not rough and rugged, through lonely vales beset with thorns and briars, but beneath her feet is pleasantness, at her side are flowers and sweet fruits, and above hang bright and sunny skies. Her voice is an angel's, and her song is "wed me, fair youth; love me, fair maiden; follow me and I will lead you on through pleasant paths unto life's close, and then, clothed with white robes, crowned with bright coronet, I will give thee a golden harp, and put a new song in thy mouth, that thou mayest sing praises to God and the Lamb forever.

Ah! the pleasures of sin are shallow at best. It is the pleasure of gliding down the river

when the current is hurrying you on, and the cataract is thundering before you. On the banks of Niagara a little child was playing one summer day, when she strayed to the water's edge and climbed into a boat. The boat moved away from the shore with the weight of the child, and pleasant were the sensations of the little one. The mother missed the child, and looking to the river saw her in the boat drifting away. She screamed and ran ; she plunged into the water to rescue her darling ; she ventured far, but failed. On sped the boat, now in the current, and along the bank ran the agonized mother. Now, see the rapids are near ! Into them the boat is plunged and hurried to the awful leap. It is carried over the precipice, and the mother's darling is dashed to atoms ! So, in the pleasure boat of sin, the lover of pleasure is drifted joyously along ; but, alas ! he is in the current of an angry flood, and there is no escape. The sensations become uneasy and painful ; there is the rocking of the rapids, and

then the wild plunge into the abyss of darkness and despair !

Therefore, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."



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